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BEETHOVEN

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leading Beethoven
conductors of today*

Sir Roger Norrington

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Iván Fischer

Michael Tilson Thomas

Paavo Järvi

Riccardo Chailly



Singapore International Competition for Chinese Orchestral Composition 2015

Registration is NOW OPEN!

Organised by the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO), the competition aims to promote musical creativity, stimulate international awareness and to establish a repertoire of Nanyang and/or Singapore-inspired Chinese orchestral pieces. The competition is open to all nationalities and ages. Winners will receive attractive prizes. Winning compositions will be performed by SCO at the Prize Presentation Ceremony & Concert on 21 November 2015.

Award Categories & Prizes

AWARD CATEGORY	PRIZE
Composition Award 1st prize	SGD 15,000
Composition Award 2nd prize	SGD 6,000
Composition Award 3rd prize	SGD 4,000
Nanyang Award	SGD 8,000
Singaporean Composer Award	SGD 8,000
Young Singaporean Composer Award	SGD 4,000
Finalists	Certificate

Competition Schedule

1 October 2014	Registration deadline
30 June 2015, 6pm	Scores submission deadline
3 to 5 August 2015	Preliminary selection
Mid August 2015	Notification will be sent to Finalists
15 September 2015	Finalists to submit part scores
20 November 2015	Finals
21 November 2015	Prize Presentation Ceremony & Concert
22 November 2015	Symposium

For more details, visit the official SICCOC website at www.siccoc.sg.

Interested contestants may also contact Ms Lum Mun Ee or Ms Shi Tian Chan at +65 65574035, or email siccoc@sco.com.sg, on any enquiries to the competition.

GRAMOPHONE

US SOUNDS OF AMERICA

RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

JS Bach

Six Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

Rachel Mercer VC

Pipistrelle (M) (2) PIP1403 (140' • DDD)



Recordings of Bach's Cello Suites are abundant and varied, performed with

attention to historical practices or conceived as a series of romantic flights. On her new recording, Rachel Mercer doesn't impose doctrinaire impulses on the Suites but explores a range of expressive and rhythmic nuances in Bach's iconic music. Her playing is absorbing and sensitive, full of insightful phrasing, reflective subtlety and, when suggested, *joie de vivre*.

Given the fact that Mercer is performing the Suites on the 1696 Bonjour Stradivarius cello (on loan from the Canadian Council Musical Instrument Bank), it might be tempting to listen with ears poised exclusively for tonal splendour. The Strad, indeed, is a resplendent instrument, rich throughout its range, with more than a hint of tonal bronze. But Mercer consistently uses the cello's strengths to compelling musical effect, finding fresh ways to shape lines and lift the plethora of magisterial notes off of the page. The Strad's superior qualities quickly play second, well, cello to Bach's inspirations, especially when Mercer focuses on the moments of brooding and sublime lyricism, as in the sarabandes. The cellist stretches notes judiciously and breathes with the arc of phrases.

The Suites are divided on the two discs along odd- and even-numbered lines. The order doesn't matter: what's most significant is the organic and urgent artistry Mercer brings to the music. As she savours the transcendent unfolding of material, Mercer draws the listener deeply into Bach's singular galaxy. **Donald Rosenberg**

Boyer

Symphony No 1. Silver Fanfare. Festivities.

Three Olympians. Celebration Overture

London Philharmonic Orchestra / Peter Boyer

Naxos American Classics (B) 8 559769 (55' • DDD)

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Lawrence Brownlee

The American tenor on his first CD of solo arias with orchestra

Why have you focused solely on Rossini?

Rossini seemed appropriate – that's mostly what I sing. But I wanted to include arias that aren't part of the mainstream. Having performed many of these on stage or in concert, I knew they were great works.

Which aria will surprise listeners the most?

'Terra amica' from *Zelmira* is very rarely performed – the structure is wonderful, it needs a virtuosic approach to sing, and the singer must be really engaged.

Are you a natural *bel canto* singer?

I had wanted to sing Puccini and Verdi, but I had a wise teacher who said that wasn't where my voice was and presented me with 'Ecco ridente' from *Barber of Seville*. I've always had a high, flexible voice, which works in *bel canto*.

Which roles are you most drawn to?

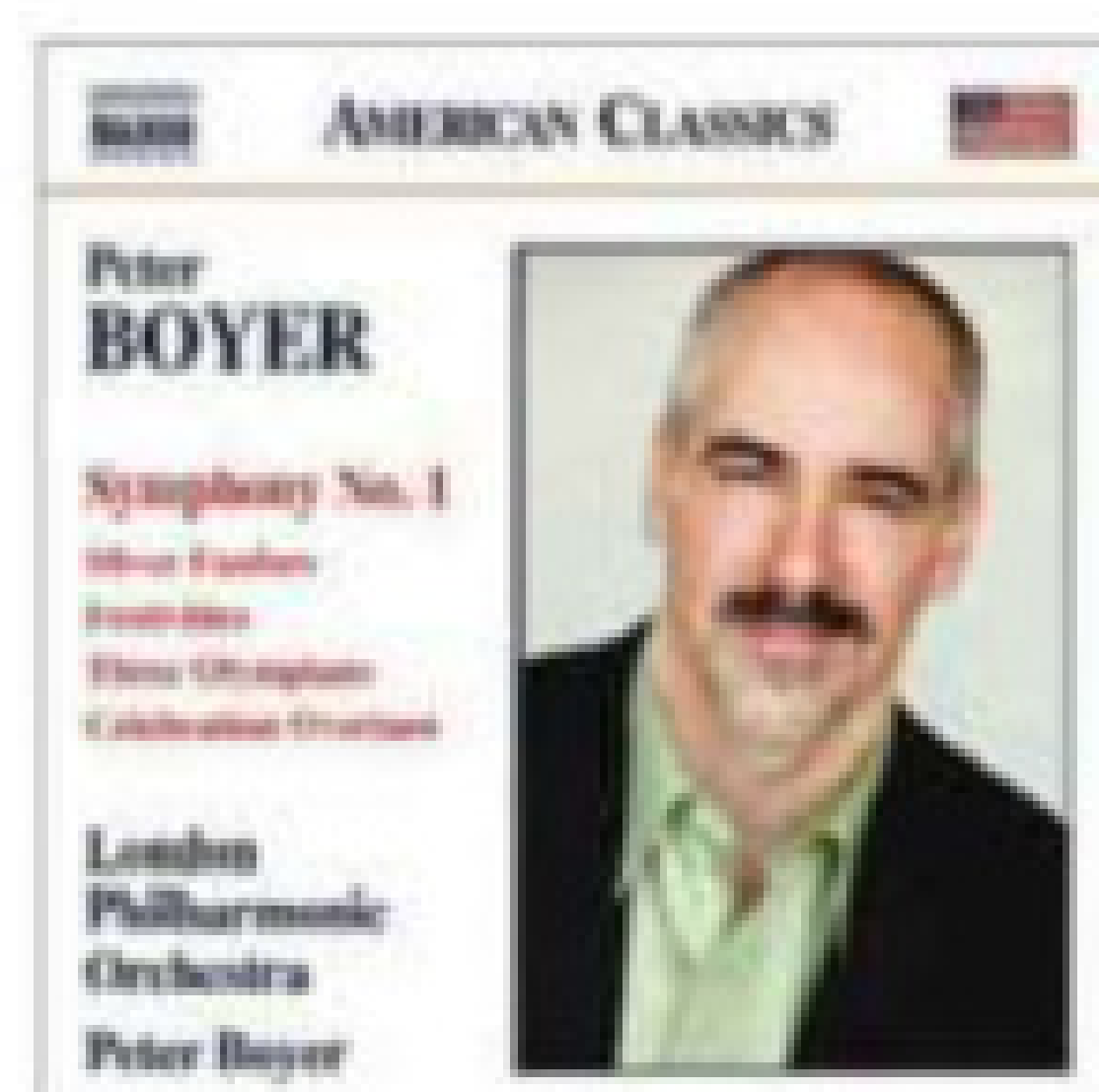
I'm naturally a silly person so the comic roles



come fairly easily to me but I find I'm more challenged in the tragic roles – King James in *La donna del lago*, for example. It's about building the arc of a character and making that character believable.

Is all Rossini the same?

There's a similarity in his writing, but for me it's about bringing out the colours and trying different things based on the words. Thankfully I speak Italian so I'm able to understand the weight of the words and the double entendres, which inform what I'm singing. Yes, Rossini has to be technically sound, the high notes have to be spot on, but it's the words that express the emotions.



Peter Boyer's love affair with American orchestras continues with his second Naxos

recording, dedicated to celebratory works composed for five American orchestras over a period of 15 years. Boyer, who claims more than 300 performances by more than 100 orchestras, writes in a fluent, powerful style that fuses conservative American currents with Hollywood-ish size and populist sentiment.

The disc's three overtures, commissioned by the Pacific Symphony for its 25th anniversary season, the Eastern Music Festival for its 50th and the Henry Mancini

Institute for its inaugural season in 1997 before moving a decade later from Los Angeles to Miami, are similar enough in tone and attitude that one could be mistaken for another. *Three Olympians* for string orchestra, however, commissioned by the Conductors Institute at Bard College for performance by 30 conductors in the summer of 2000, strikes more personal notes and demonstrates the composer's orchestration gifts in a *tour de force* that evokes Apollo, Aphrodite and, in a brilliant finale, Ares.

Boyer describes the disc's nominal headliner, his ambitious Symphony No 1, as referencing the first symphonies of Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein. Commissioned by the Pasadena Symphony for its 2012-13 season and dedicated with the

THE ITALIAN SOPRANO

MARIA LUIGIA BORSI

"THE YOUNG ITALIAN SOPRANO HAS A NICE LYRICAL VOICE... SHE SOUNDED AT EASE IN THE WILLOW SONG, FOR WHICH SHE GAINED A BIG APPLAUSE.."

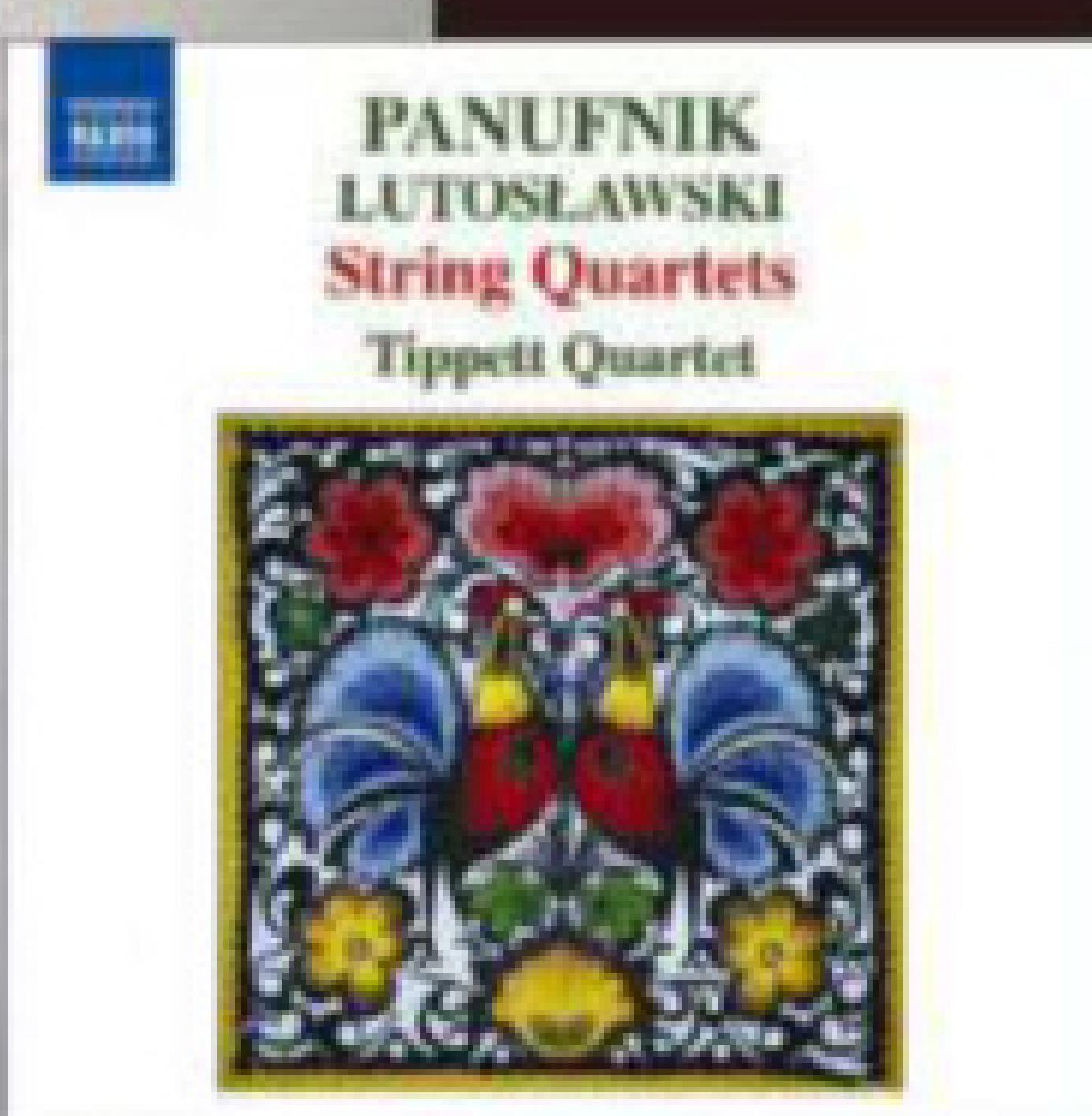
– **THE OPERA CRITIC**



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Photo: Philip Taylor



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– **BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE**
ON 8559723



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Photo: Cheryl Gorski



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Photo: Marco Borggreve



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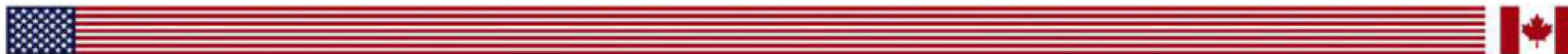
RZEWSKI:

FOUR PIECES FOR PIANO

RALPH VAN RAAT • LUNA PARK • ARNOLD MARINISSEN

"RALPH VAN RAAT'S SEASONED NEW-MUSIC CREDENTIALS, VIRTUOSO TECHNIQUE AND NATURAL AFFINITY FOR RZEWSKI'S MULTI-FACETED KEYBOARD-WRITING ARE EVIDENT IN NEARLY EVERY SECTION."

– **GRAMOPHONE ON 8559360**



Composer and conductor: Peter Boyer conducts his powerful orchestral works during recording sessions at Abbey Road Studios, London

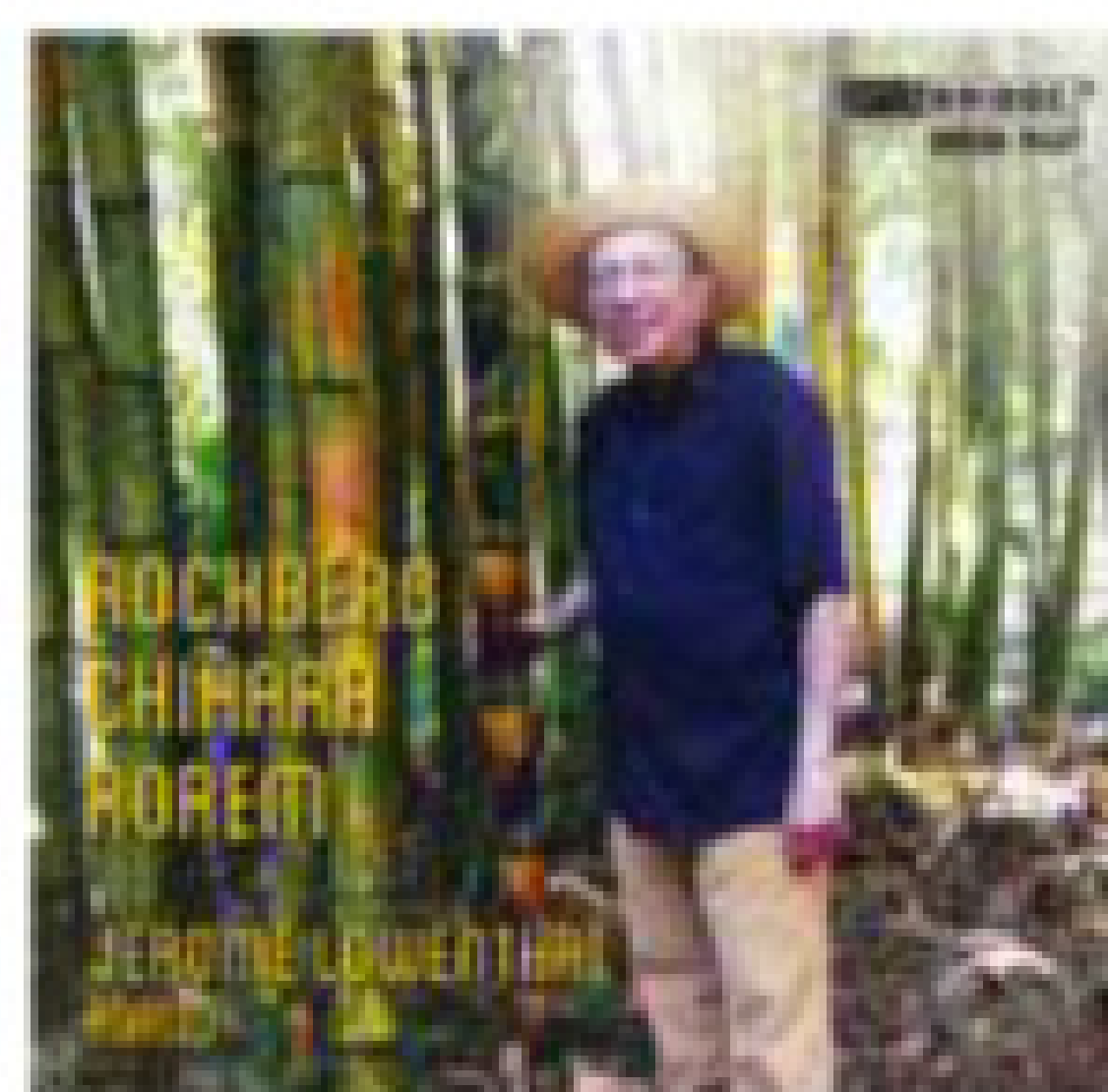
family's acceptance to the memory of Bernstein, the three-movement work is dominated by an 11-minute long third movement, an absorbing, eventful *Adagio* with beautiful, written-out solo riffs.

Conducted by Boyer, the eloquent, sparsely recorded performances by the London Philharmonic are let down only by an occasional slackening of tension.

Laurence Vittes

Chihara • Rochberg • Rorem

Chihara Bagatelles (Twice Seven Haiku for Piano) **Rochberg** Carnival Music. Nach Bach. Partita-Variations **Rorem** 75 Notes for Jerry Jerome Lowenthal *pf*
Bridge © BRIDGE9417 (74' • DDD)



Jerome Lowenthal knows good music when he plays it. The American pianist has performed a vast repertoire during his expansive career, and – as his commanding new recording attests – remains as curious and charismatic as ever at the age of 82. Lowenthal's disc is a tribute to three American composers, all of whom wrote works for him.

Rochberg and Chihara share a fascination with previous masters and styles in the pieces Lowenthal presents. After years as a composer of severely atonal music, Rochberg embraced tonality, pastiche and parody, producing works blending past and present elements. *Carnival Music* has fun with allusions while achieving its own, distinctive voice. The quotations in *Nach Bach* emerge as enchanting and jolting surprises, while old forms receive captivating new lives in *Partita-Variations*.

Lowenthal's devotion to new music can also be gleaned in the Chihara and Rorem pieces. The former's *Bagatelles (Twice Seven Haiku for Piano)* revel in subtle sonic evocations of the Japanese poetic genre, even as they quote myriad noted composers. (Schumann's 'The Happy Farmer', used so exuberantly in the film of *The Wizard of Oz*, is given particularly entrancing treatment.) Rorem wrote his *75 Notes for Jerry* for the pianist's 75th birthday, and manages to convey worlds of meaning in the 80 or so seconds it takes to dispatch this poignant score.

As in Classical and Romantic repertoire, Lowenthal brings consummate taste, clarity and drama to the alluring offerings on this fragrant menu.

Donald Rosenberg

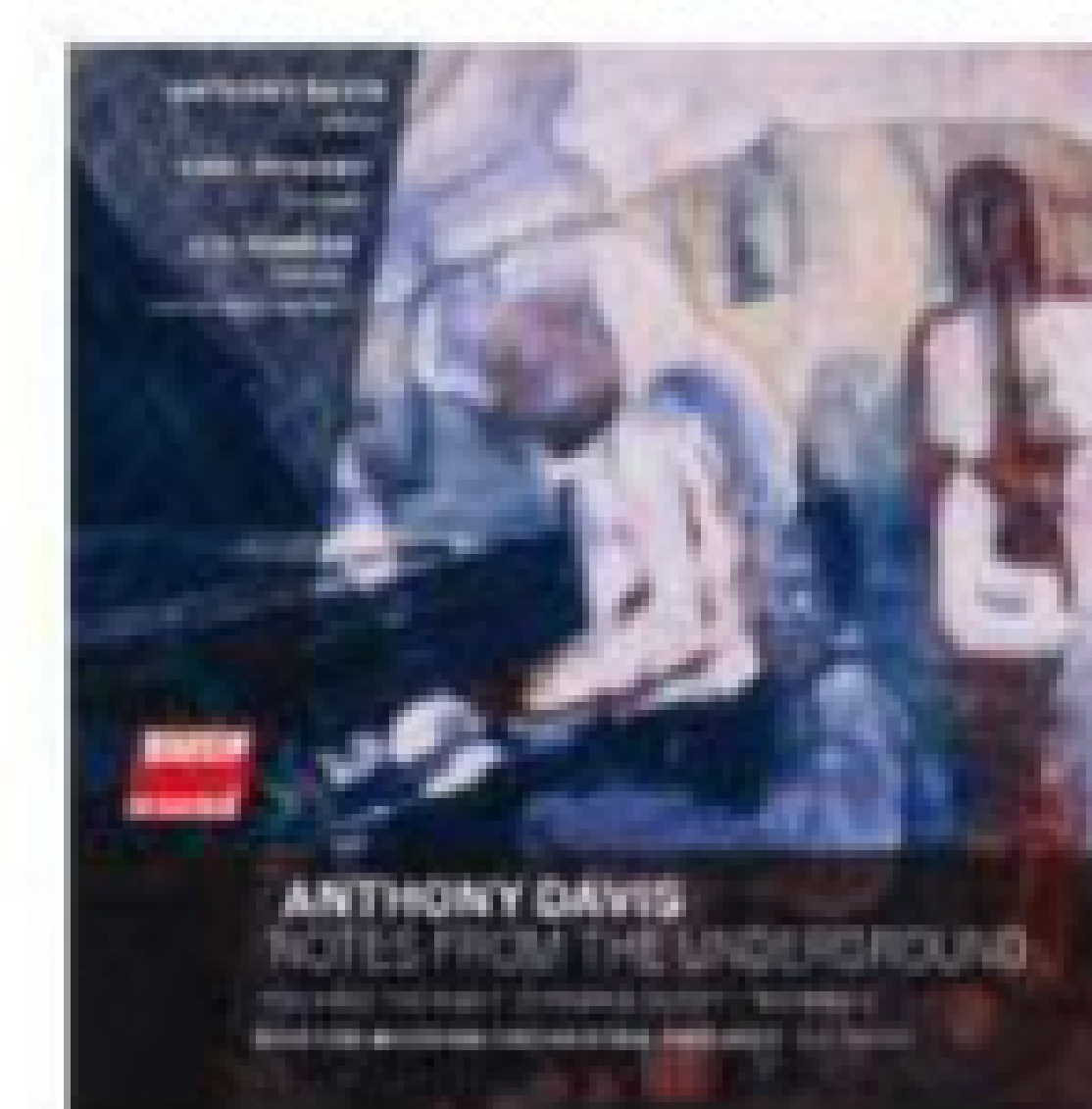
A Davis

Notes from the Underground. You Have the Right to Remain Silent^a. Wayang V^b

^aJD Parran *cl/contralto cl*

^aEarl Howard Kurzweil ^bAnthony Davis *pf*

Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose
BMOP/sound © 1036 (61' • DDD)



The Boston Modern Orchestra Project's commitment to music's ability, and

perhaps its obligation, to convey powerful messages across vast emotional and socio-political landscapes continues with three intense works by Anthony Davis. Composed over a 20-year span, in each unique, seamless narrative influenced by inescapable American realities there resides a smouldering sense of all hell about to break loose.

The most powerful, and painful, is *You Have the Right to Remain Silent*, a clarinet concerto written for JD Parran, chamber ensemble and real-time Kurzweil processing, premiered at New York's Miller Theatre in 2007, which tracks the 'dangerous spaces' of interrogation, loss and incarceration through played and occasionally spoken dialogues.

SIR SIMON RATTLE & MAGDALENA KOŽENÁ

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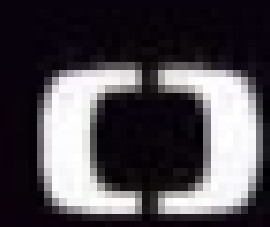
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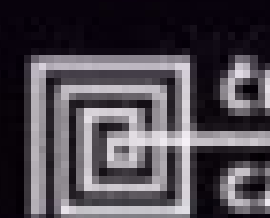


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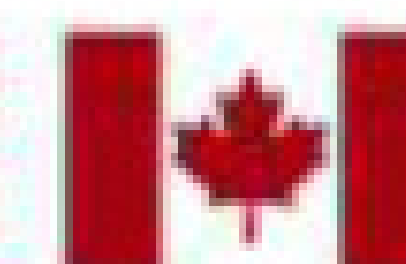
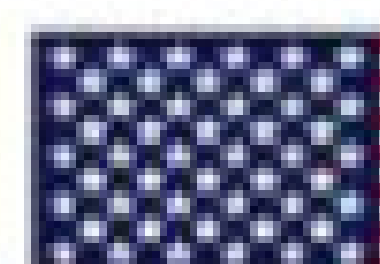
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The other two works are initially more abstract in their impact: *Notes from the Underground* for full orchestra, based in part on riffs from Duke Ellington and dedicated to Ralph Ellison, referencing his landmark 1964 collection of essays *Acts and Shadows*; and *Wayang V* for solo piano and orchestra, inspired by Balinese gamelan music and highlighted by a brilliant array of percussion, winds and solo violin.

The recordings, made between 2007 and 2013 in and around Boston, are as full-range, intense and virtuoso as the performances, handling the demands of Davis's improvised jazz-based but virtually unlimited style with audiophile ease. For the booklet-note, Davis and colleague George E Lewis contribute similarly virtuoso comments and analyses of the compositional processes in a historical framework upon whose resolution, Davis's music clearly argues, America's identity so critically depends.

Laurence Vittes

Kotche

'Adventureland'

Anomaly^a. The Haunted^b.

The Traveling Turtle^c. Triple Fantasy^d

^bLisa Kaplan, ^bYvonne Lan *pfs* ^bMatthew Duvall,

^aGlenn Kotche, ^bDoug Perkins *perc* ^deighth

blackbird; ^cGamelan Galak Tika / Evan Ziporyn;

^{ad}Kronos Quartet

Cantaloupe © CA21098 (58' • DDD)



Joined by the Kronos Quartet, eighth blackbird and Evan Ziporyn's Gamelan

Galak Tika, Chicago-based percussionist/composer Glenn Kotche and his magical drum-kit take off on a series of abstract sonic experiments with powerful back stories. Called 'Adventureland' for its 'confluence of new territory' (and inescapably if unintentionally recalling the iconic Walt Disney theme parks), Kotche's fourth studio album is his first for ensembles.

As the composer's deftly varied instrumental vocabulary begins to become familiar, including some minimal effects processing and electronic percussion added after the fact, his booklet-notes, which are formatted as if they had been printed out from an iOS device, enhance the experience. *The Haunted* responds to visits to a pig-iron blast furnace in Alabama and other environments associated with death; *Anomaly*, resulting from a Kronos Quartet performance in 2006, deals with friends, family and



Adventures and anomalies: the Kronos Quartet both inspire and perform music by Glenn Kotche

circumstance; *The Traveling Turtle* refers to the slow pace of life on the road (and tangentially Bali, hence the gamelan); the exquisite *Triple Fantasy* is a 'dense stew of elements' from the recording itself.

The 14 tracks of the two large suites and two smaller works, which are refreshingly sequenced not in conventional order but based on what Kotche thought would have 'the best flow and architecture', can of course be reordered so that *Anomaly* and *The Haunted* play through in their seven- and five-movement entirety. However, as the composer told me, 'this is an album in the classic sense of the word more than a presentation of the compositions'.

Laurence Vittes

Rossini

'Virtuoso Rossini Arias'

Le comte Ory - Que les destins prospères.

La donna del lago - O fiamma soave. La gazza

ladra - Vieni fra questa braccia. L'occasione fa

il ladro - D'ogni più sacro impegno. Otello -

Che ascolto!. Semiramide - Ah dov'è, dov'è il

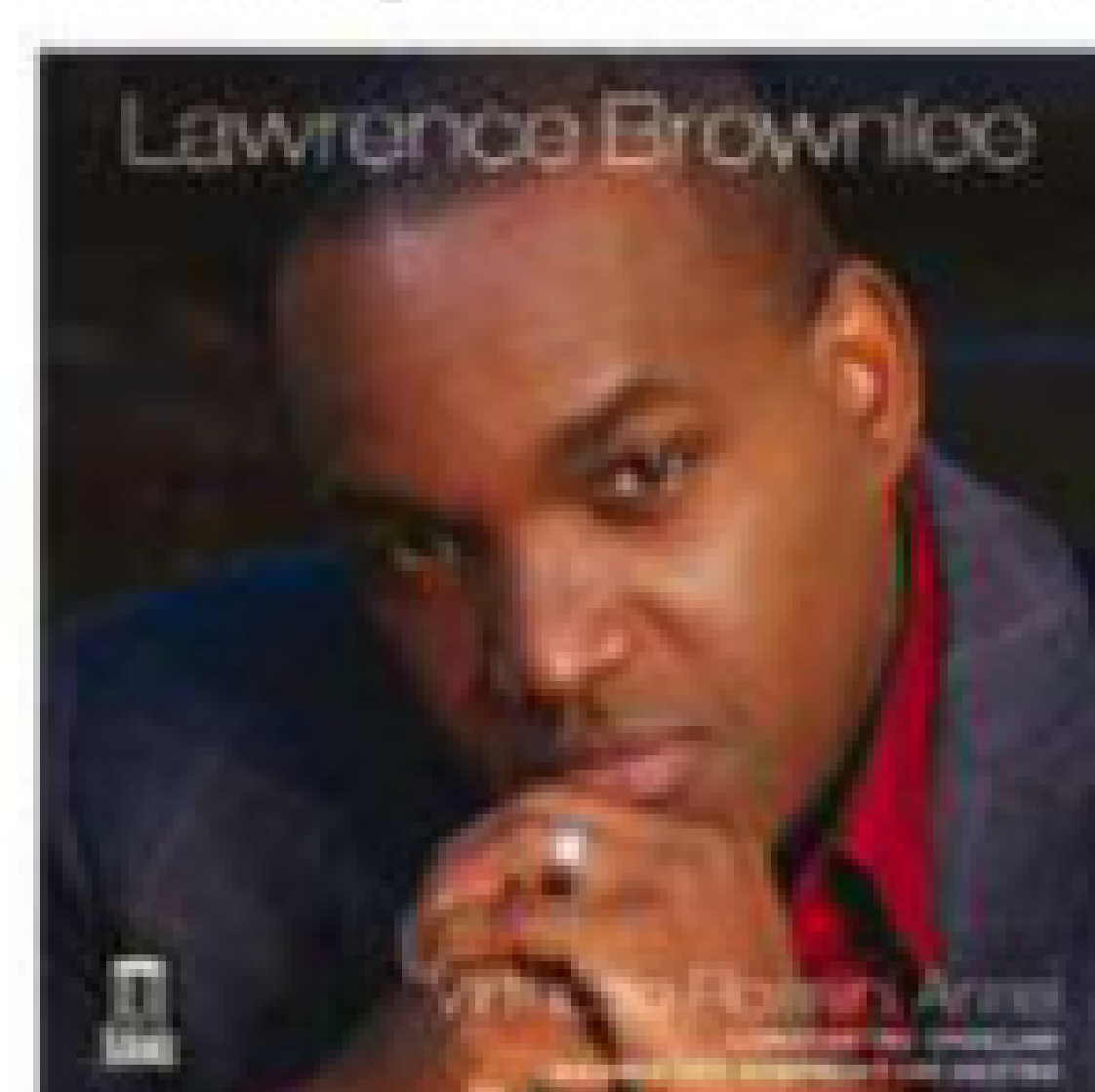
cimento. Il turco in Italia - Tu seconda il mio

disegno. Zelmira - Terra amica

Lawrence Brownlee *ten* Kaunas City Symphony

Orchestra / Constantine Orbelian

Delos © DE3455 (55' • DDD)



Everything Lawrence Brownlee touches with his sterling tenor springs to expressive life. His timbre is honeyed, and he phrases with exceptional discernment and vibrancy.

And, to say the least, Brownlee has the technical prowess needed to tame the acrobatic beasts in the Rossini arias on his newest recording.

The eight arias he performs with the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra and conductor Constantine Orbelian are prime *bel canto* challenges in which only a select number of singers find success. At one moment, Rossini spins long lines requiring utmost control of breath and nuance. Then there are those wild flights full of scales, florid passages and fearsome jumps to the heights.

Brownlee never sounds ruffled by the obstacles. At the end of 'D'ogni più sacro impegno' (from *L'occasione fa il ladro*), he holds a high B flat for what my timepiece clocked in at 15 seconds. Rossini sprinkles other stratospheric notes (more than a few Cs and Ds) throughout the arias to test the mettle of even the bravest tenor. Brownlee manages these daring feats with bountiful panache.

There is far more to this artist's vocal arsenal than fancy tricks. Brownlee caresses lyrical phrases and elegantly conveys each character's emotional circumstance. 'Ah, dov'è, dov'è il cemento', Idrino's Act 1 aria from *Semiramide*, receives intensely felt shading. Brownlee is the epitome of the tender lover in the title character's 'Tu seconda il mio disegno' (from *Il turco in Italia*).

All told, it's a pleasurable excursion in the realm of Rossinian delights, with Orbelian and the Kaunas musicians serving as deft collaborators.

Donald Rosenberg



KNOW MUSIC KNOW LIFE



David Krakauer The Big Picture

The Big Picture explores the universal search for one's personal identity through the inseparable relationship between music and movies. Clarinetist extraordinaire David Krakauer's otherworldly interpretations of the music found in a myriad of moviegoer favorites such as *Sophie's Choice*, *Life is Beautiful*, *The Pianist*, and *Radio Days* transport the listener on an incredible voyage.



Philippe Sly Love's Minstrels

For his new album, exceptional bass-baritone Philippe Sly sings works by Williams, Quilter, Ireland, Willan & Host. The combination of melodies strongly suggestive of folk song with exquisitely sensitive and noble poetry creates a unique "high folk-art". Irresistible!



Aki Kuroda 20th Century Piano Transcriptions

Japanese pianist Aki Kuroda presents four orchestral works from the dawn of the 20th century, written by four composers who perhaps more than any others were shaping the course of new music at the time. Here are heard as transcribed for piano solo, she reveals new perspectives on them.



Anne Akiko Meyers The Four Seasons: The Vivaldi Album

Debating at Number One on the Billboard Classical chart, this superb performance by superstar Anne Akiko Meyers presents the first studio recording of the legendary "Vieuxtemps" Guarneri Del Jesu violin.



Yevgeny Kutik Music from the Suitcase: A Collection of Russian Miniatures

As featured in the New York Times and on NPR's 'All Things Considered', acclaimed violinist Yevgeny Kutik performs Russian violin music that was so important to his emigration to the West. More important than any other possessions his family could take from their Russian homeland.



Rinaldo Zhok Liszt / Verdi: Complete Paraphrases

Rinaldo Zhok dedicates a disc honoring Verdi's bicentenary with Liszt's complete operatic transcriptions and paraphrases, which he brings together for the first time on CD in their entirety.



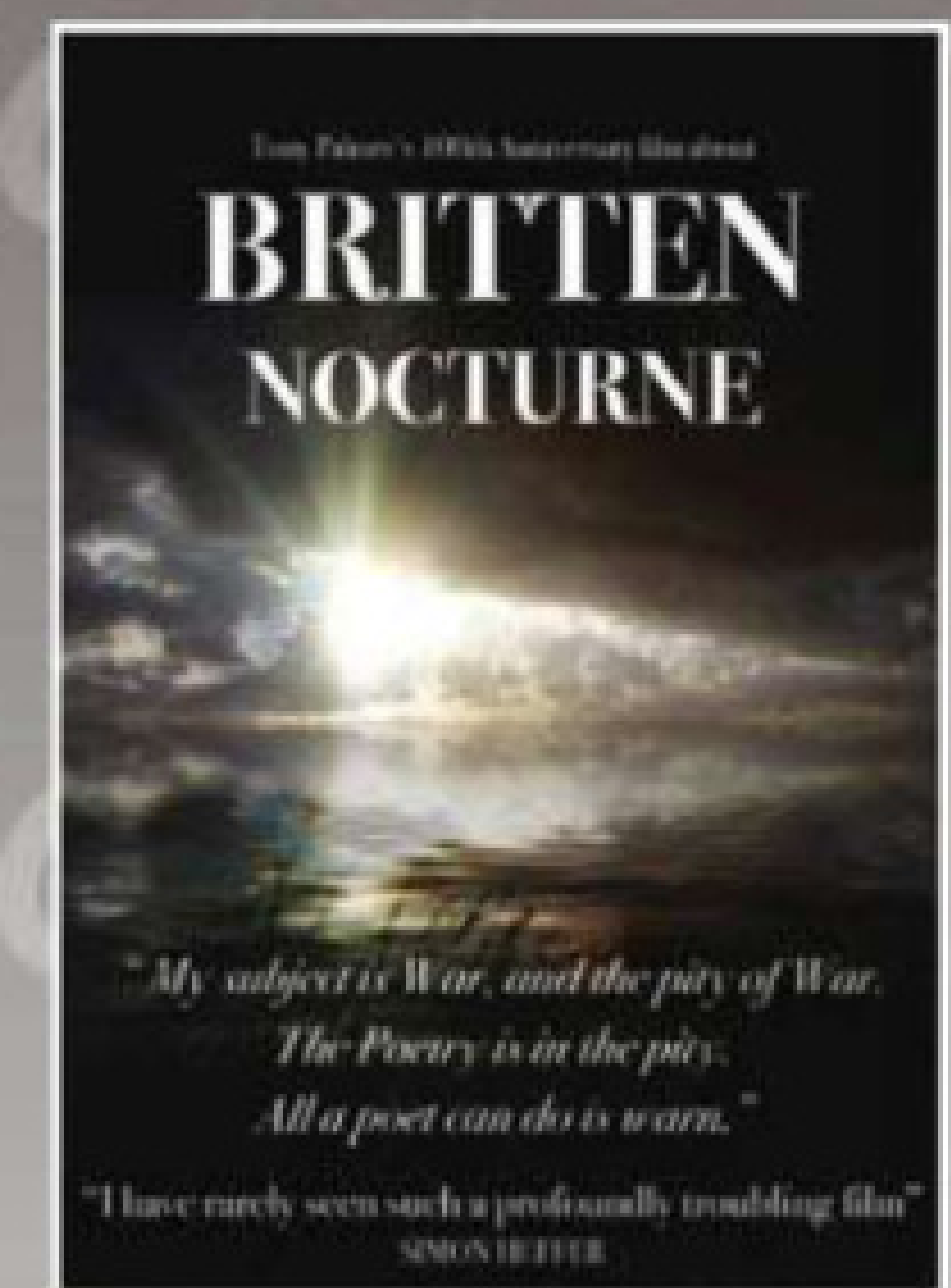
Maria Bengtsson; Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne; Bertrand de Billy Beethoven: Overture Leonore I; Ah! Perfido!; Cherubini: Symphony in D Major; Vous voyez de vos fills

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Diana Gabrielyan Stravinsky, Shostakovich & Babajanyan

With this recording pianist Diana Gabrielyan explores the musical richness of the twentieth century in Russia and her native Armenia with sonatas by Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Babajanyan and Mansuryan.



Benjamin Britten: Nocturne

"It is impossible not to be moved by this combination of content and music. The film is riveting from first frame to last, and the effect is devastating as a portrait of artistry and sorrow. It will be a reference point for decades to come." Jan Harlan, Stanley Kubrick's Producer



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THE SCENE

The new concert season gets underway with Andsnes joining Dudamel in Los Angeles, Weilerstein playing Elgar in Milwaukee, a new Figaro production at the Met, and a lavish Otello in Houston

SEATTLE, WA

Seattle Symphony

Opening gala with Lang Lang (Sep 15)

There's a definite Central- and Eastern-European flavour to the opening gala concert of the Seattle Symphony. It features Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances*, Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances* for orchestra, Pancho Vladigerov's Toccata, a selection of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances*, as well as Borodin's 'Polovtsian Dances' from *Prince Igor*. Music Director Ludovic Morlot shares conducting duties with the orchestra's Associate Conductor, Stilian Kirov. This folk-inspired showcase concludes with the brilliance and brio of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 3, performed by the piano superstar Lang Lang.

seattlesymphony.org

MILWAUKEE, WI

Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

Weilerstein plays Elgar (Sep 19-20)

The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's 2014-15 season gets underway with the supremely expressive cellist Alisa Weilerstein in a performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto with Music Director Edo de Waart leading. Weilerstein, who has recorded the concerto with Barenboim, has a profound understanding of this ultra-Romantic work. Other works include Britten's 'Four Sea Interludes', bringing the drama of his opera *Peter Grimes* into the concert hall, and the lyrical and upbeat Symphony No 8 by Dvořák.

mso.org

NEW YORK, NY

Metropolitan Opera

Opening night: Le nozze di Figaro (Sep 22)

The Met kicks off its new season with a new production of Mozart's beloved *Le nozze di Figaro*, with Music Director James Levine conducting. This production, directed by Richard Eyre, is set in a Seville manor house in pre-Civil War Spain (during the late 1920s). The dazzling cast features bass-baritone Ildar Abdrazakov as Figaro, Marlis Petersen as his bride, Susanna, Peter Mattei as the skirt-chasing Count, Marina Poplavskaya as the Countess, and Isabel Leonard as the love-struck Cherubino. The production uses a revolving set, designed by Rob Howell, to keep the action fluid. The October 18 matinee is

EVENT OF THE MONTH



BOSTON, MA

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Opening night (September 27)

Andris Nelsons (above), the Boston Symphony

Orchestra's 15th Music Director, begins his inaugural season in grand style with a work that reportedly first inspired him at the tender age of five – Wagner's *Tannhäuser* Overture. The Latvian maestro is bringing fresh energy to the BSO, whose previous Music Director, James Levine, resigned due to ill health in 2011. For opening night, Nelsons is also joined on stage by two opera stars – one happens to be his wife, the acclaimed Latvian soprano Kristine Opolais; the other is star German tenor Jonas Kaufmann. The singers perform arias and duets from high-Romantic works in the German and Italian repertoire, including the powerful duet from Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. The evening ends with Respighi's *Pines of Rome*, which will surely allow this orchestra to show just what it can do.

bso.org

beamed to cinemas worldwide as part of the Met's Live in HD season.

metoperafamily.org

LOS ANGELES, CA

Los Angeles Philharmonic

Beethoven cycle with Leif Ove Andsnes (Oct 9-12)

Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, in the last year of his three-year Beethoven journey, joins the Los Angeles Philharmonic for its season opener in a presentation of Beethoven's last piano concerto, the *Emperor*, as well as the less frequently performed *Choral Fantasy* for piano, chorus and orchestra. Some canny programming intersperses John Adams's first piece for chorus and orchestra, *Harmonium*, between these Beethoven monuments. Gustavo Dudamel leads the orchestra, which is also joined by the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

laphil.com

MIAMI, FL

New World Symphony

Season opening with MTT (Oct 11-12)

The New World Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas's cultural gem in the heart of Miami, opens its season with 20th-century American and European modernist works, juxtaposed in a number of striking ways: George Antheil's *A Jazz Symphony* is followed by Arnold

Schoenberg's Cello Concerto (a transcription of Matthias Georg Monn's 18th-century concerto for keyboard and orchestra.) The guest soloist is Tamás Varga, Principal Cello with the Vienna Philharmonic. The programme also includes Stravinsky's Symphony in C and his later work *Scherzo à la russe*, which originated as a jazz piece before the composer rearranged it for symphony orchestra; the piece was in fact premiered in 1946 by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

nws.edu

HOUSTON, TX

Houston Grand Opera

Verdi: Otello (Oct 24 – Nov 7)

Verdi's *Otello* makes a welcome but long-awaited return to the stage of the Houston Grand Opera after 25 years. It was Plácido Domingo who sang the title-role the last time around. According to the *Houston Chronicle*, this delay only goes to show how difficult it is to cast the part. The HGO has found its leading man in the form of acclaimed New Zealand-born tenor Simon O'Neill. In another thrilling piece of casting, soprano Ailyn Perez (winner of the Richard Tucker Award in 2012) sings Desdemona. This performance is led from the pit by Patrick Summers.

houstongrandopera.org

Previews by Damian Fowler

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Reaching new audiences in unexpected ways

This month I attended two entirely contrasting events, one steeped in tradition and symbolism, the other oozing contemporary chic, but both shared a common theme.

On June 11 Westminster Abbey held a Service of Thanksgiving for Sir John Tavener, a composer whose music inspired listeners far beyond usual classical audiences, weaving itself even into the lives of many who might not have considered themselves classical listeners at all. The event encapsulated both the grandeur and intimacy which, paradoxically, lie at the heart of Tavener's music – characteristics that co-exist not in tension but in dialogue, perhaps reflecting life itself.

The artists who performed represented many of Tavener's important musical partnerships: Stephen Layton, who had conducted *The Veil of the Temple*; Steven Isserlis, whose 1989 Proms premiere of *The Protecting Veil* (and subsequent *Gramophone* Award-winning recording) changed perceptions of cellist, composer and in many ways contemporary classical music alike; and Patricia Rozario, whose soprano voice had brought such passion to so much of Tavener's work. The service was a moving, rewarding reminder of how listening to his music compels us to adjust our comprehension to a contemplative pace.

From medieval magnificence to the cool of Berlin's Apple Store – solid wood benches displaying stylish gadgets, surrounded by a buzz of on-trend youth and hip T-shirted staff. Built out of a former cinema, one of its auditoriums has been turned



Martin

into a concert venue. I was there for a performance by Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Philharmonia (brought over specially!), of Sibelius, Lutosławski and Salonen's own Violin Concerto, performed with intense physicality by Leila Josefowicz. Prior to the concert Salonen took part in a public conversation, and afterwards sat down to a Twitter Q&A. But his biggest outreach to audiences – both Apple's and beyond – has been an iPad advertising campaign, in which he is seen contemplating, composing and then conducting his Violin Concerto. This vivid burst of classical music at its most contemporary has been airing in primetime programmes on mainstream TV, and served up by some of the highest-profile websites.

Getting the message to the young and otherwise culturally engaged that classical music can be thrilling and fascinating is a constant battle. Here, Apple, which has an enviably powerful resonance among that very demographic, is not only channelling that message directly to them, but adding a veneer of Apple cool to it.

What ties these two vastly different occasions together is simply that each represents the triumph of the belief that classical music can reach large and unexpected audiences, without having to dumb down. Viewers of Apple's ad (or audiences in its store) aren't given 'crossover': in Salonen they're getting new music without compromise. Likewise, Tavener's music was a strongly personal modern voice, one that was never alienating but could still challenge.

Sometimes, it seems, music's greatest opportunities for outreach are found where we least expect them.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'The thing that struck me most about Steven Osborne and Alina Ibragimova was the freeness of their musical

thinking,' says **CAROLINE GILL**, who has written this month's Musician and the Score. 'They surfed through the pages of the score with the familiarity to know exactly where everything was, at the same time as looking at it as if for the first time.'



'Romain Rolland dubbed the Second Act of *Orfeo* "the most moving act in all opera"; says this month's Collection

writer **RICHARD WIGMORE**. After listening to 20-odd recordings of Gluck's opera, Richard concluded Rolland was exaggerating – 'but not by much. The work's balancing of chaste beauty and violent forces exerts a unique fascination.'



MICHAEL MCMANUS is a self-confessed Beethoven addict, so this month's cover story was a

pleasure to write. As he says, 'In the right hands, a combination of words and music – as in Beethoven's Ninth – can be so much more than the sum of its parts. I hope these nine very individual testaments provide further evidence of that.'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Iain Fenlon • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Caroline Gill • Edward Greenfield • David Gutman • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Tess Knighton • Richard Lawrence • Ivan March • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • Ken Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

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EDITORIAL
Phone 020 7738 5454 **Fax** 020 7733 2325
email gramophone@markallengroup.com
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Martin Cullingford
DEPUTY EDITOR Sarah Kirkup / 020 7501 6365
REVIEWS EDITOR Andrew Mellor / 020 7501 6367
ONLINE AND FEATURES EDITOR
James McCarthy / 020 7501 6366
SUB-EDITOR David Thresher / 020 7501 6370
ART DIRECTOR Dinah Lone / 020 7501 6689
PICTURE EDITOR Sunita Sharma-Gibson / 020 7501 6369
AUDIO EDITOR Andrew Everard
EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Libby McPhee
THANKS TO Marija Đurić Speare, Hannah Nepil and Charlotte Smith
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James Jolly

ADVERTISING
Phone 020 7738 5454 **Fax** 020 7733 2325
email gramophoneads@markallengroup.com
SALES MANAGER
Esther Zuke / 020 7501 6368
SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE
Luke Battersby / 020 7501 6373

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES
0800 137201 (UK) +44 (0)1722 716997 (overseas)
subscriptions@markallengroup.com

PUBLISHING
Phone 020 7738 5454
GROUP BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Luca Da Re / 020 7501 6362
PUBLISHING EXECUTIVE Rachel Cramond / 020 7501 6372
DIGITAL AND MARKETING DIRECTOR
Matthew Cianfarani
DATA AND DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
Tom Pollard
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Richard Hamshire / 01722 716997
PRODUCTION MANAGER Jon Redmayne
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Sally Boettcher / 01722 716997
SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER Chris Hoskins / 01722 716997
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Siân Harrington
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Ben Allen
CHAIRMAN Mark Allen

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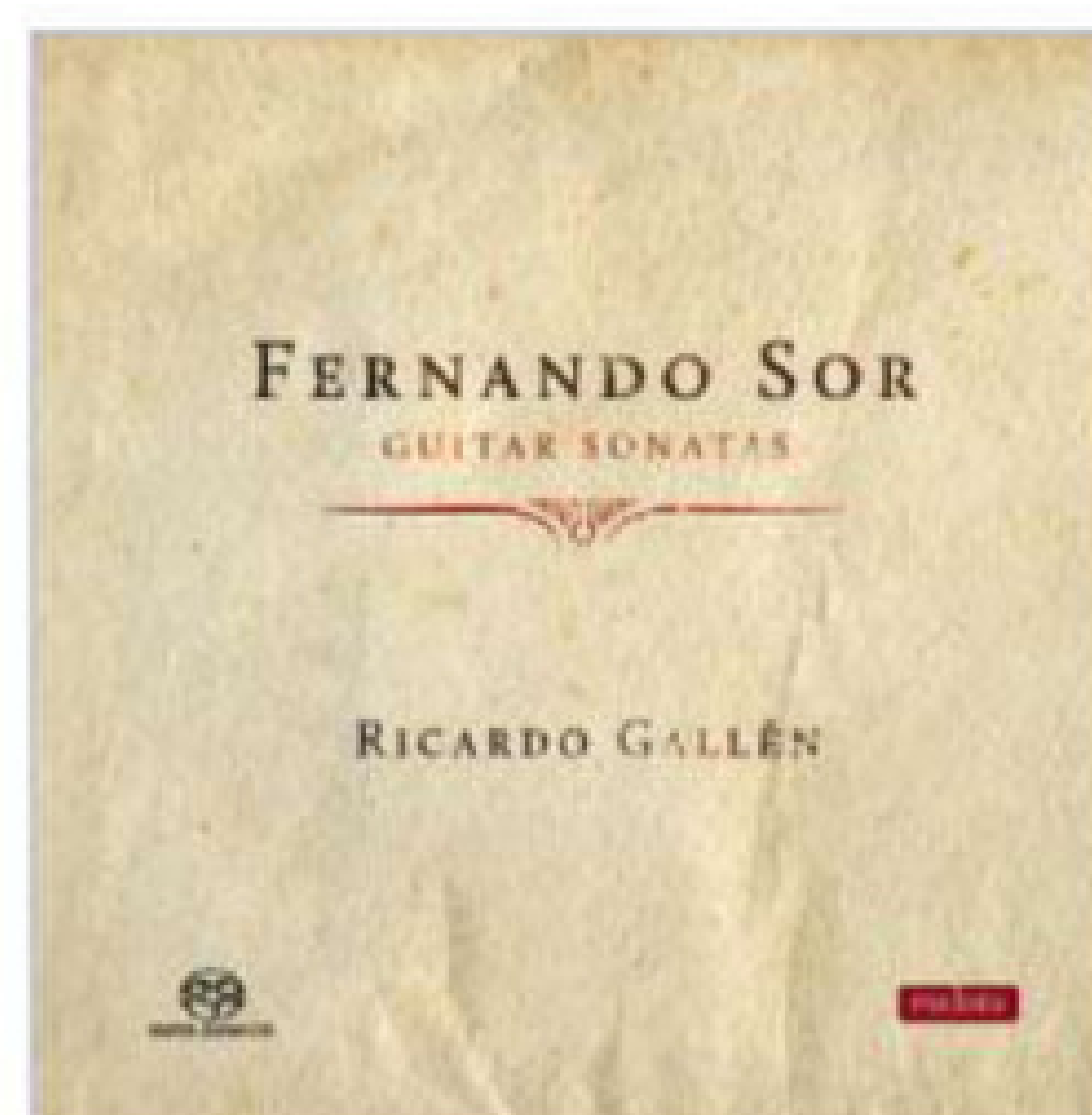
Gabriel Prokofiev Selected Classical Works 2003-2012

With a track list hand-picked by Gabriel Prokofiev this album presents a ground-breaking set of recordings released over 9 years charting the emerging career of a unique voice in contemporary classical music.

"Gabriel Prokofiev is in the vanguard of redefining classical music conventions" Financial Times

All tracks have been remastered by Gabriel Prokofiev for release on this album.

Nonclassical NONCLS017



Fernando Sor Guitar Sonatas Ricardo Gallén Guitar

Fernando Sor's guitar sonatas rank among the most important compositions in the guitar repertoire, harmonically exquisite, at times full of melancholy and longing, but also lively and virtuosic.

"Splendid performances of Fernando Sor's four sonatas, recorded in a stunningly natural surround sound. Gallén's playing is rhetoric, elegant and richly nuanced." Remy Frank, Pizzicato

Eudora EUD-SACD-1401

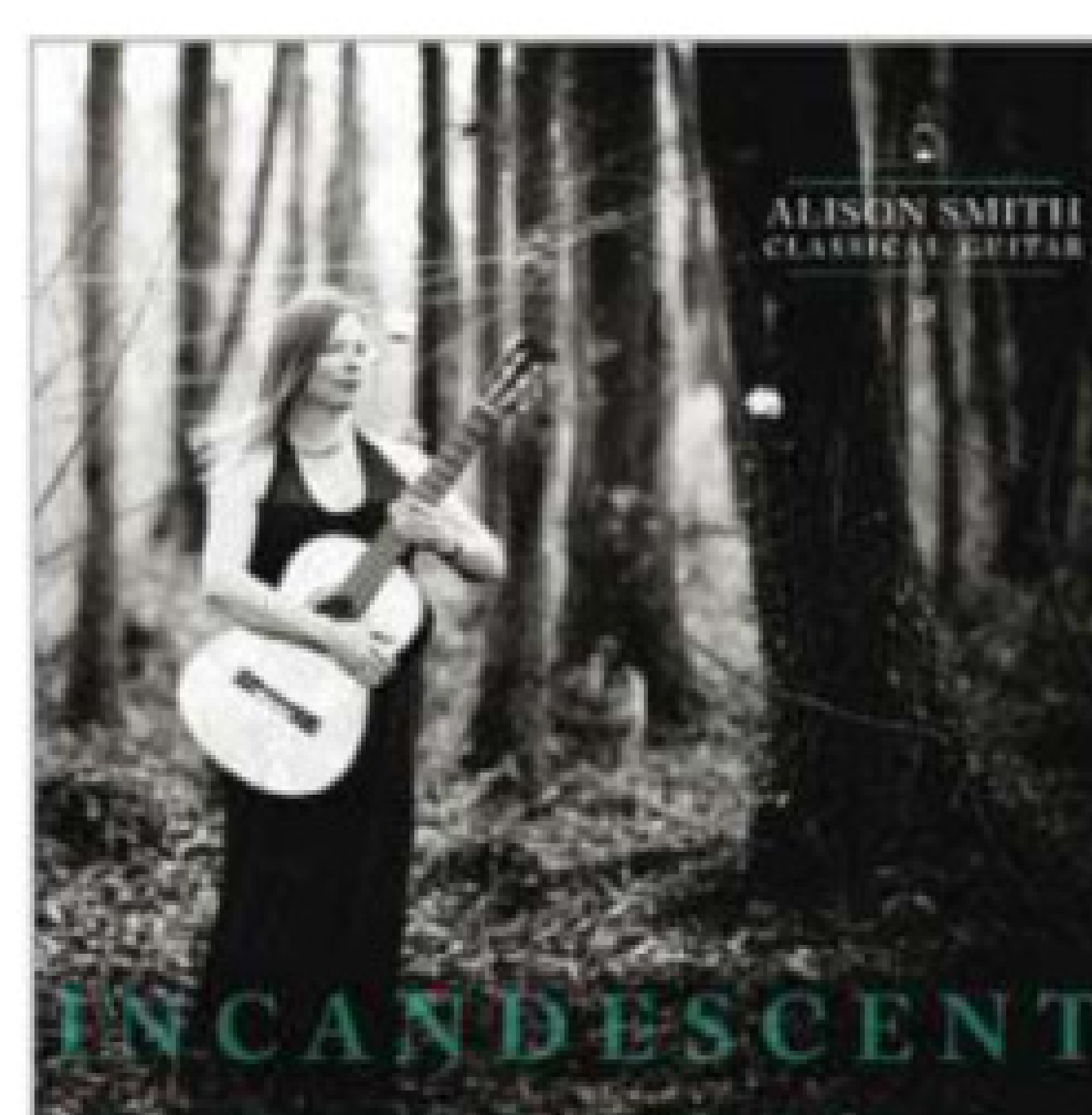


Gabriel Fauré Requiem Orchestra & Voices of St John's Smith Square

This inaugural album release on the new OSJAlive label presents John Lubbock's 2013 critically acclaimed interpretation of Fauré's Requiem featuring Ilona Domnich (Soprano) and Johnny Herford (Bass).

Also includes the World Premiere performance of John Lubbock's moving orchestration of Fauré's "Eight Songs".

OSJ Alive OSJCD01



INCANDESCENT Alison Smith Classical Guitar

Album includes works by Albeniz, Ryan, Bach, Tarrega, Giuliani, Cottam, Mertz and Lovelady.

"enthraling....demonstrated sheer virtuosity... superb technique and sensitivity...a master class of classical guitar played with friendly charm and sublime expertise" The International Guitar Festival of Great Britain

"Lovely hypnotic playing" BBC Scotland

Alison Smith ASICD02



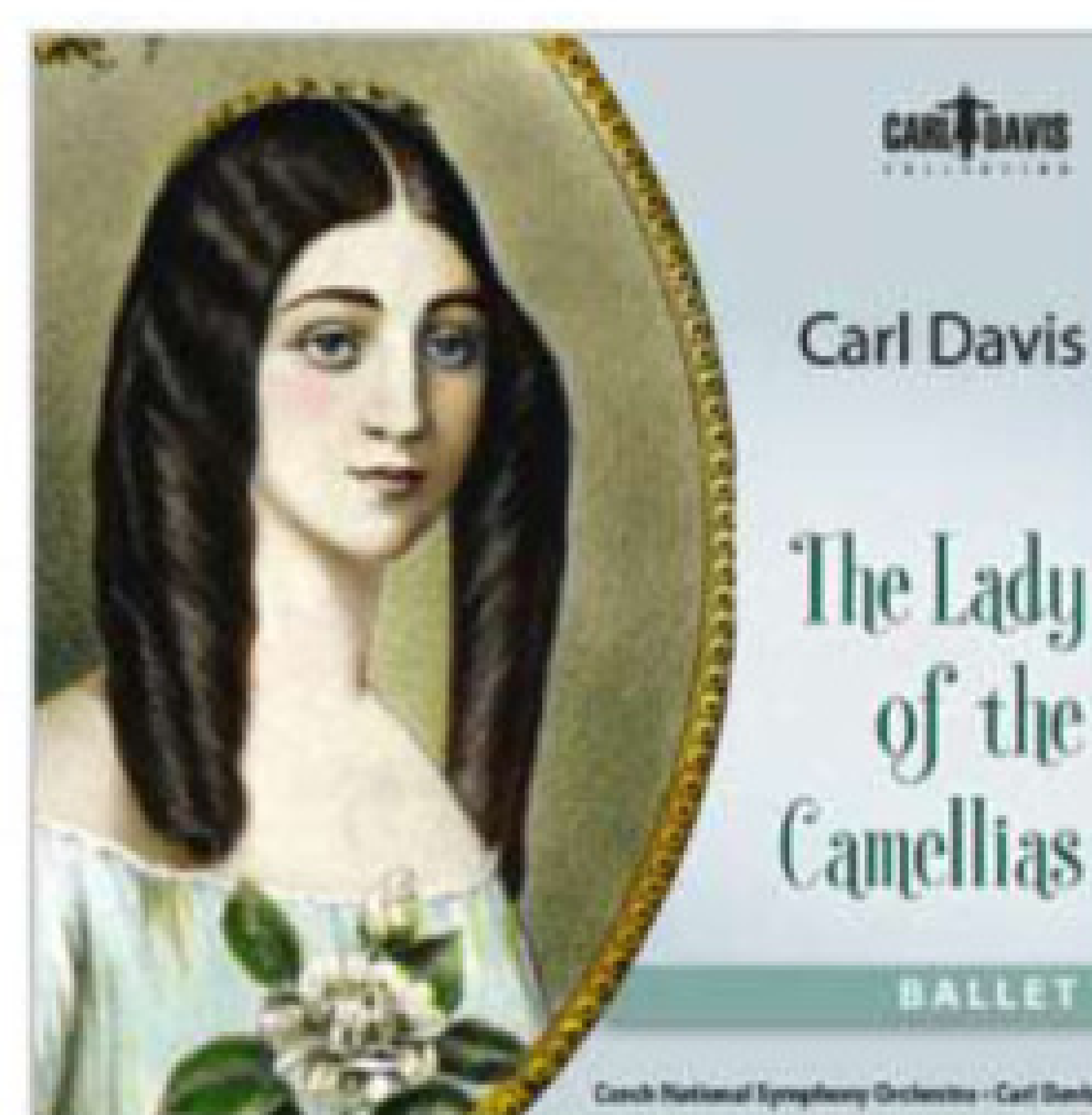
Steps Vol. 4 Libro di Canti Italiano

Fabio Menchetti Piano

Sheva Collection presents the latest in Peter Seabourne's large scale piano series "Steps". Volume 4 is inspired by facets of Italian culture and character.

"amazingly inventive, especially with regard to rhythm... harmonic colourings and drive call to mind someone like Prokofiev, and do not suffer by comparison... deserve a wide audience." Music Web International

Sheva Collection SH104



The Lady of the Camellias Carl Davis

The Carl Davis Ballet *The Lady of the Camellias* is based on the life of Marie Duplessis, a French courtesan and mistress to a number of prominent and wealthy men including Alexandre Dumas Jr, Liszt and Chopin.

The Ballet charts her rise from rags to riches and her untimely early death. This double album is recorded with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra.

Carl Davis Collection CDC023

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Victoria Soames-Samek, Artistic Director Clarinet Classics

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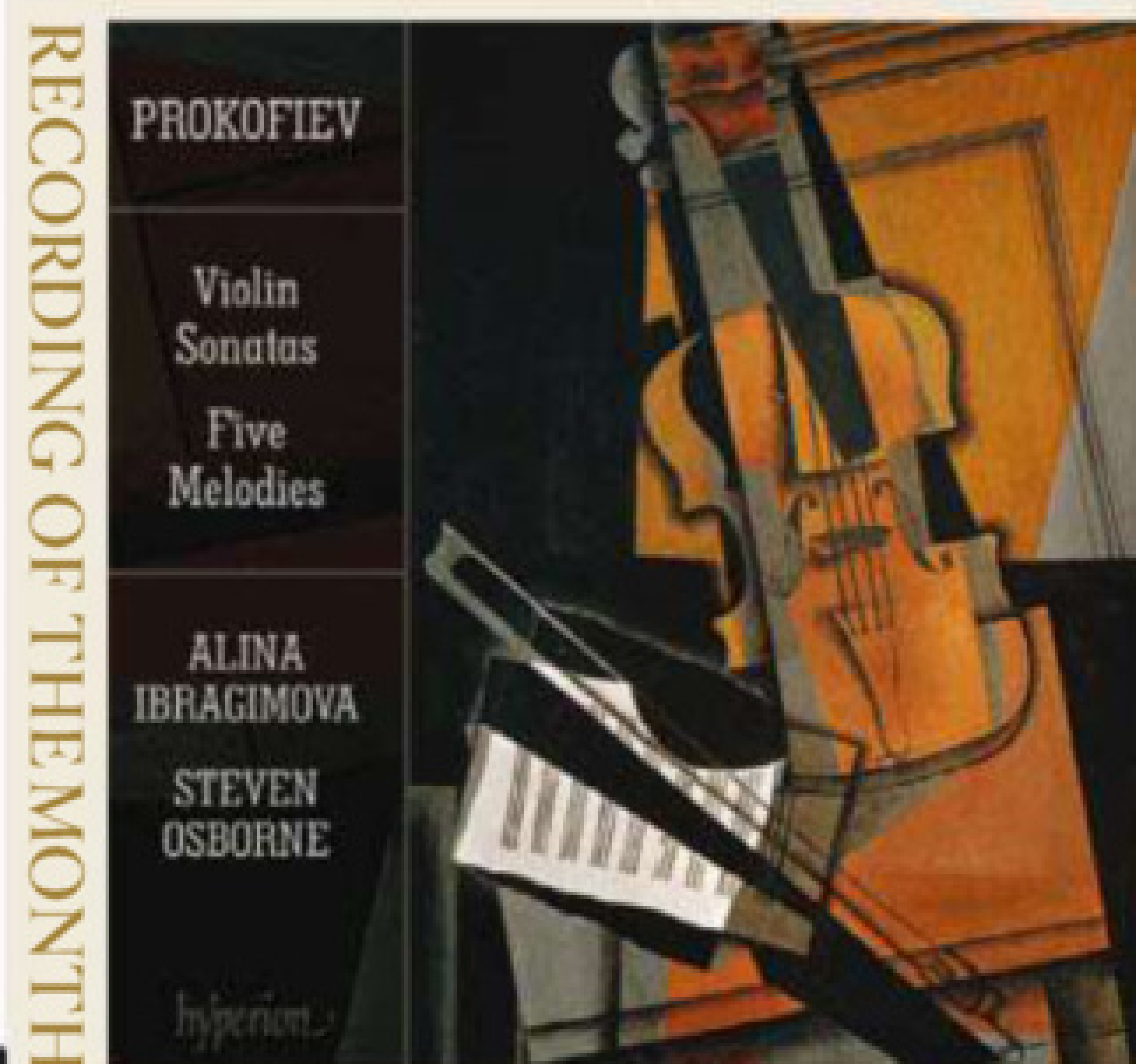


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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford introduces the finest recordings from this month's reviews



PROKOFIEV

Violin Sonatas Nos 1 & 2. Five Melodies

Alina Ibragimova *vn*
Steven Osborne *pf*
Hyperion © CDA67514

► **GEOFFREY NORRIS'S REVIEW**
IS ON PAGE 28

Two of today's most impressive soloists unite in pieces both introspective and lyrical, and – particularly the First Sonata – deeply emotional. Musical collaboration at its most intense and thoughtful.



BRUCH. PROKOFIEV

Violin Concertos

Guro Kleven Hagen *vn*
Oslo PO / Bjarne Engeset
Simax © PSC1266

A delight to

be acquainted with the name and performance of a very impressive young musician, her interpretations entirely confident and full of character.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 32**



MOZART Violin

Concertos Nos 3-5

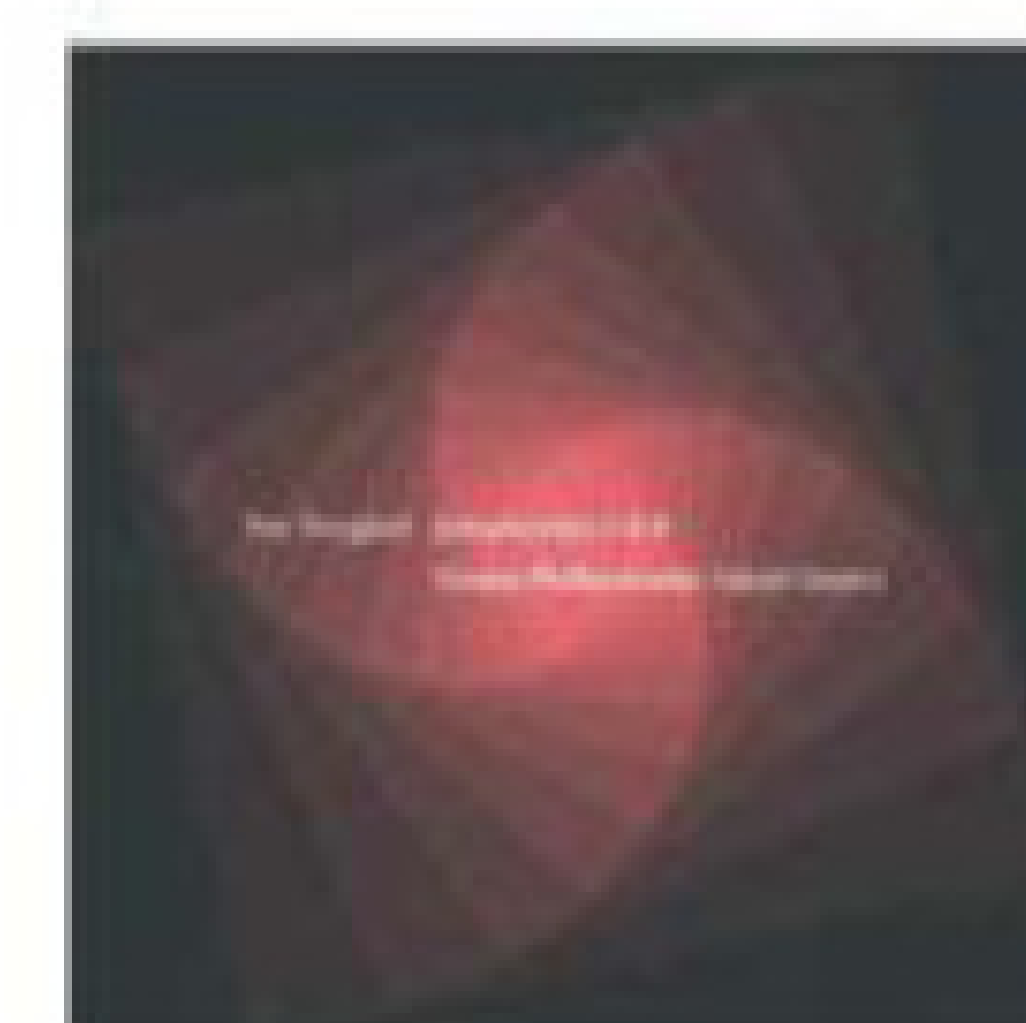
Arabella Steinbacher *vn*
Festival Strings Lucerne / Daniel Dodds

Pentatone ©

PTC5186 479

Performances that exude sheer joy, from a soloist who sounds completely at ease in these works.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 38**



NØRGÅRD

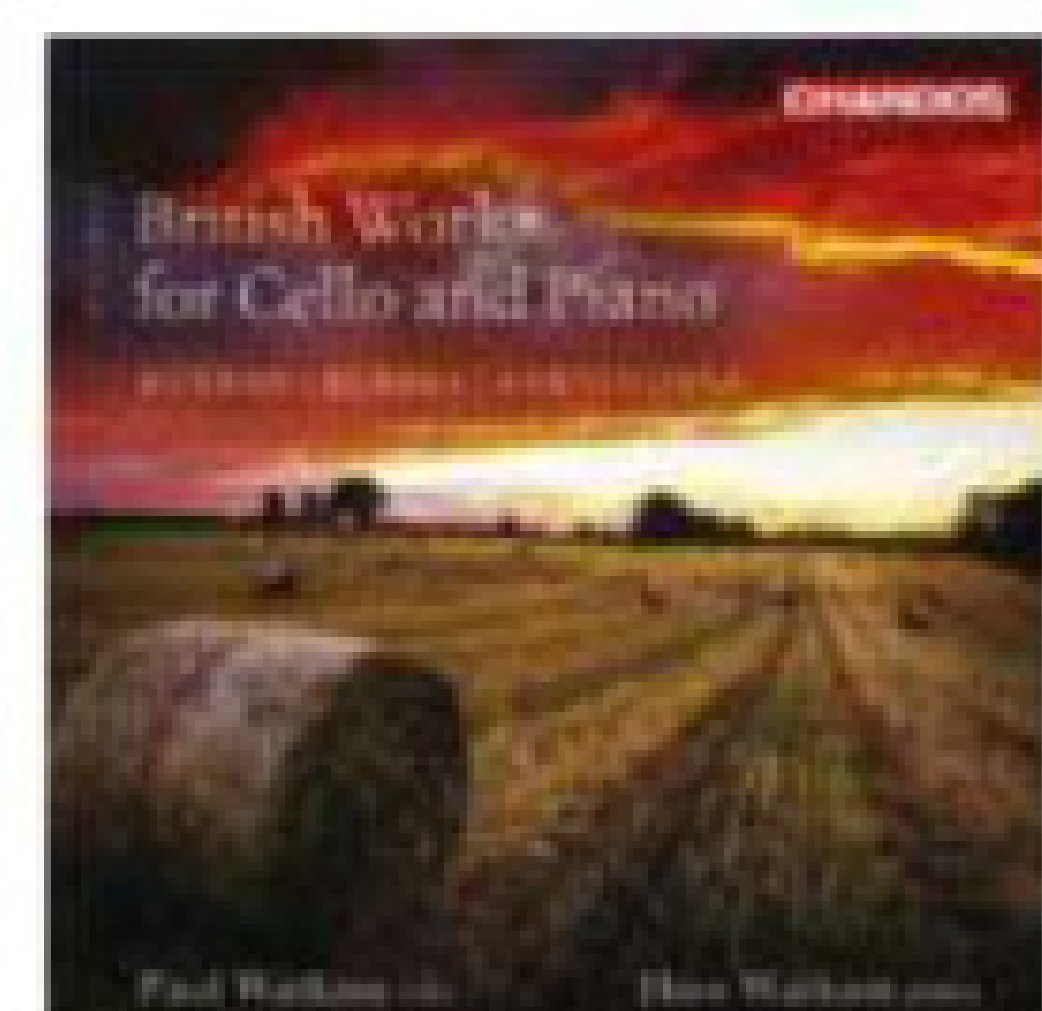
Symphonies Nos 1 & 8

VPO / Sakari Oramo
Dacapo © 6 220574

The premiere recording of

Nørgård's latest symphony is a rewarding listen, the Vienna Philharmonic bringing their perfection to his fascinating and attractive sound world.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**



'BRITISH WORKS FOR CELLO AND PIANO, VOL 3'

Paul Watkins *vc*

Huw Watkins *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10818

Another superb chamber partnership (this time from two brothers), instinctively collaborative in passages of both poignancy and urgency.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



RACHMANINOV

Piano Sonatas Nos 1 & 2.

Three Preludes

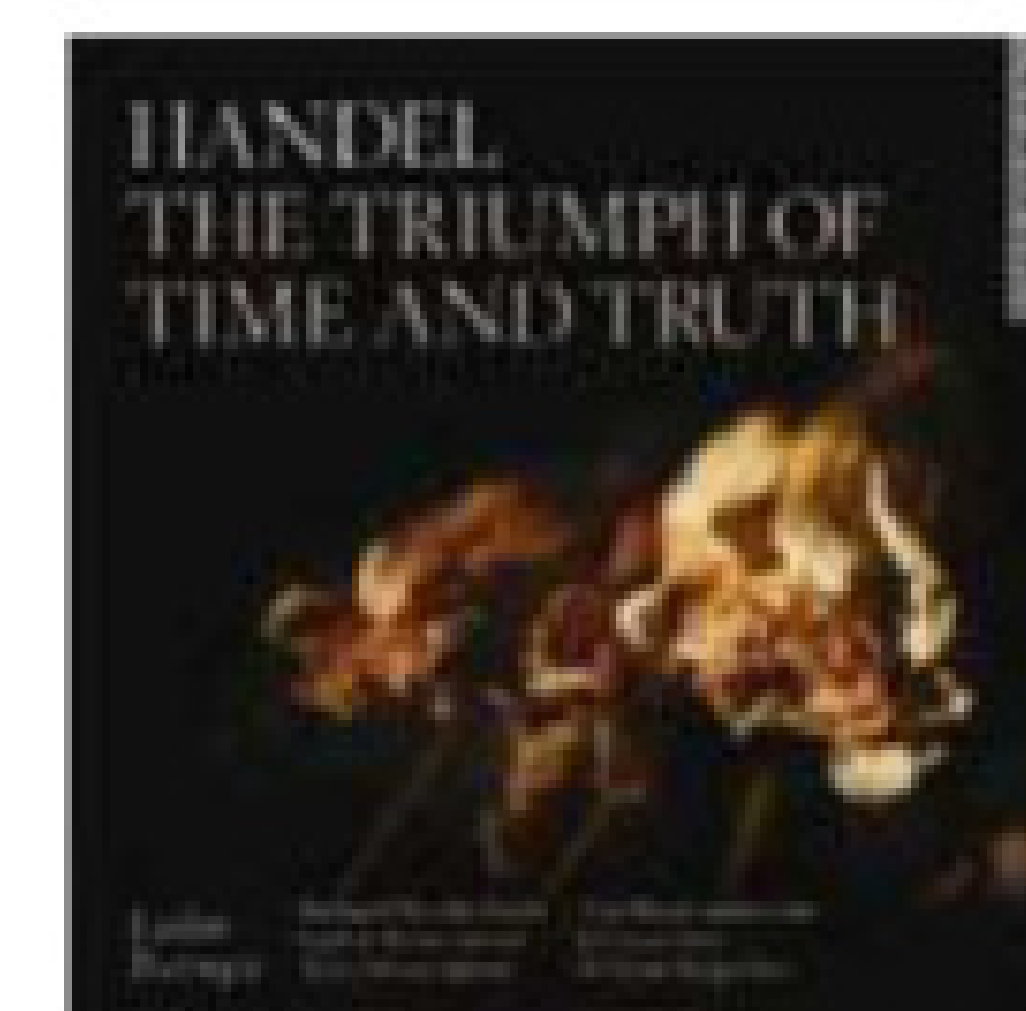
Xiayin Wang *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10816

Chandos's young

pianist Xiayin Wang excels again, affirming not only her phenomenal skill but also her clear affinity with Rachmaninov's music.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 65**



HANDEL The Triumph of Time and Truth

Ludus Baroque /

Richard Neville-Towle

Delphian © DCD34135

Excellent, spirited

singing from both choir and soloists throughout – another superb release from this Edinburgh-based label with an impressive recent 'hit' rate.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



MOODY Simeron

PÄRT Stabat mater

Soloists; Goeyvarts

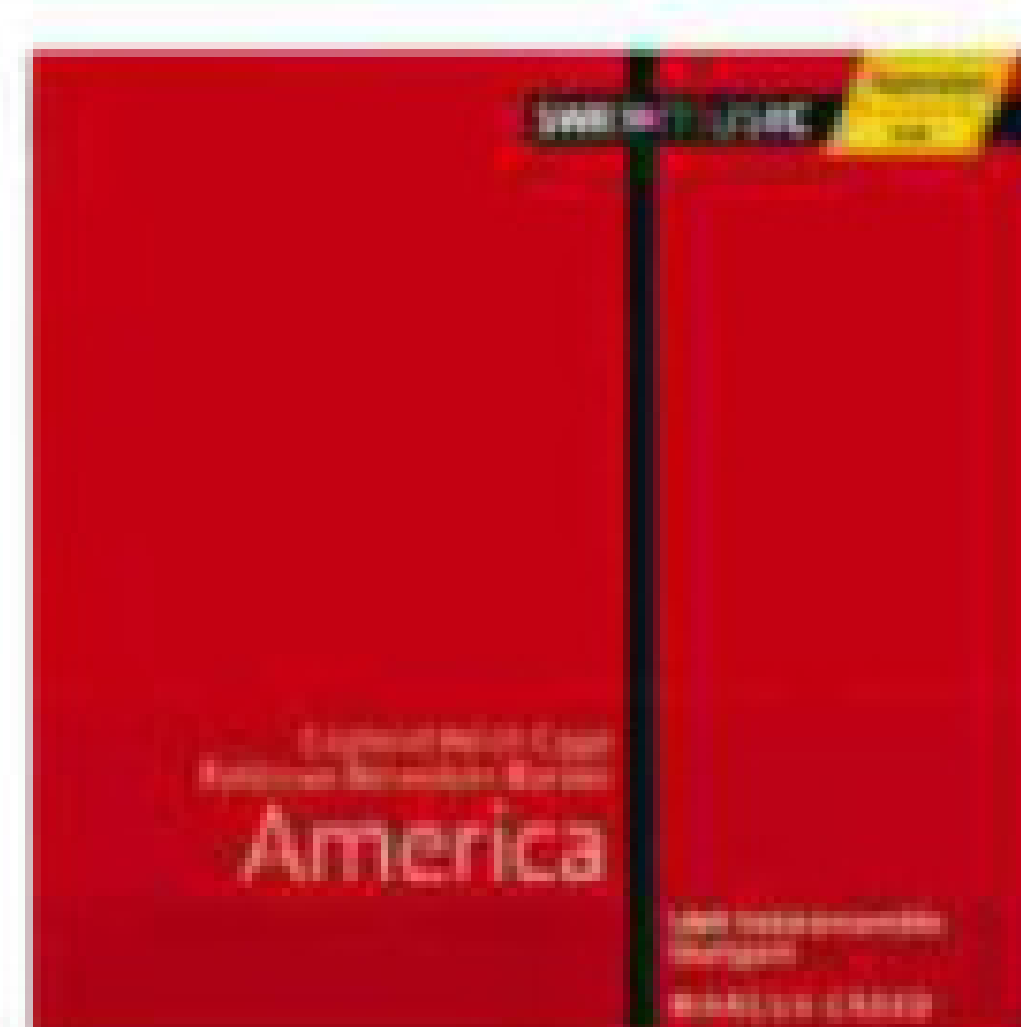
String Trio

Challenge Classics

© CC72616

The absolute control and pinpoint perfection required by pieces such as these is masterfully achieved: the result is incredibly, movingly, beautiful.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



'AMERICA'

SWR Vocal Ensemble,

Stuttgart / Marcus Creed

Hänssler Classic

© CD93 306

An attractive

programme of 20th-century American music, moments of choral weight and exposed fragility alike approached with great individuality.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**



HANDEL

Tamerlano

Soloists;

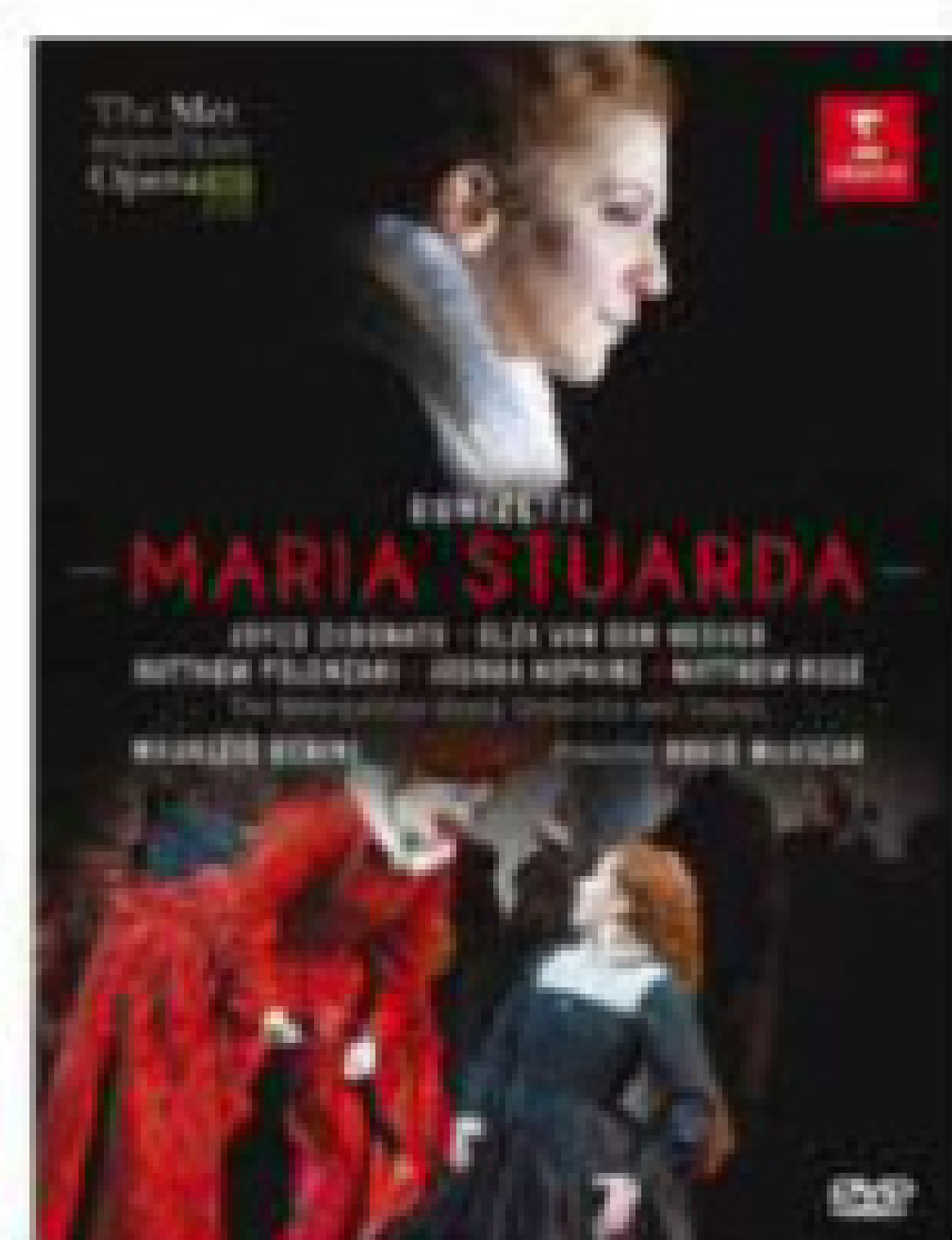
Il Pomo d'Oro /

Riccardo Minasi

Naïve © V5373

Bursting with an energetic, dramatic drive and great characterisation from the soloists. An all-round excellent Handel release.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



DVD/BLU-RAY

DONIZETTI Maria Stuarda

Sols incl **Joyce DiDonato** and **Matthew**

Polenzani; Metropolitan Opera / Maurizio Benini

Erato © DVD 2564 63203-5

The two main protagonists brilliantly capture all the opera's drama and passion; DiDonato is magnificent and moving.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**



ARCHIVE

JOHN OGDON

'The Complete RCA

Album Collection'

Sony ©

88843 03907-2

A tragic life, but one which left a legacy of remarkable music from an incredibly gifted player. ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**



Gramophone Player

Hear high-quality samples of the music online

FOR THE RECORD



The BBC announces its biggest-ever commitment to music education – Ten Pieces

BBC launches new wide-reaching initiative called ‘BBC Music’

The BBC has announced ‘BBC Music’, a new set of initiatives to promote music and engage new audiences. Among the plans, some more groundbreaking than others (and many really better described as programming announcements), is a noteworthy initiative called Ten Pieces. The aim is to reach, as Director General Tony Hall boldly claims, ‘virtually every primary school child in the country’ with 10 pieces of music, each accompanied by a film and by online resources to help teachers, Music Education Hubs and dance schools encourage their pupils to explore the works and ‘to respond creatively to the music through their own compositions, dance, digital art or animation’. The works include pieces by Handel, Holst, Beethoven, Adams and a new commission from Anna Meredith, while champions of the scheme include trumpeter Alison Balsom and violinist Nicola Benedetti. It is, according to the BBC, the biggest commitment the corporation has ever made to music education.

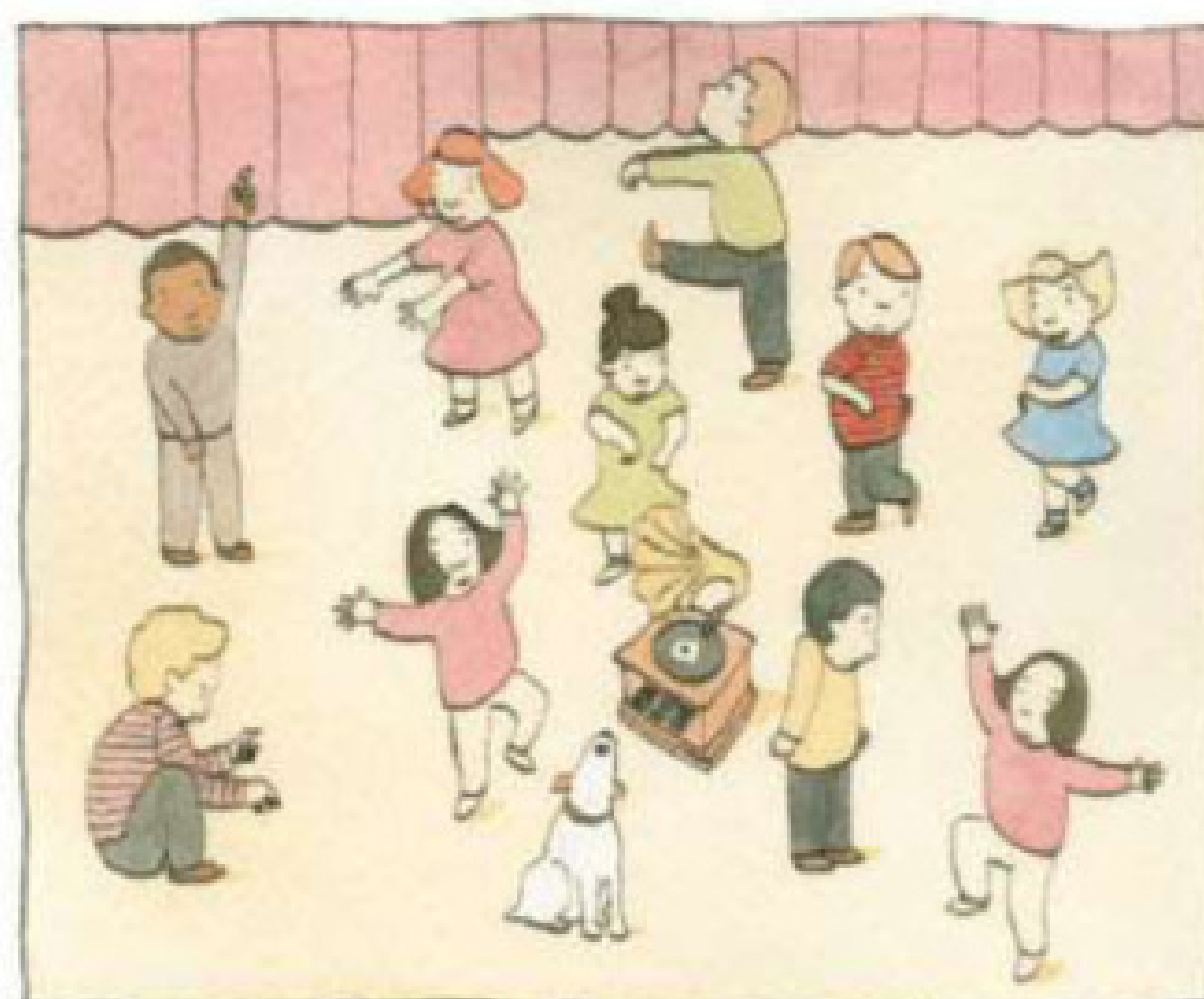
Away from classical music, another big announcement is the launch of the BBC Music Awards to celebrate pop and rock music achievements from the past year in an event at London’s Earls Court in December.

On the digital front, music is expected to get a stronger presence in the iPlayer, and improvements are being made to

BBC Playlister, a facility that enables users to compile playlists and explore those made by others. Of interest here is a relationship with iTunes, which will point people towards downloading.

Television programmes announced will explore artists and fashion from across genres: on the classical front, Monteverdi and Mozart are the subjects of two new programmes, while Caruso’s recordings will be the starting point for a series in 2016 exploring popular music.

Behind all these announcements is a strong indication that the BBC grasps the changing way people – particularly the young – are listening to music. This is an attempt to engage with those now more used to the immediacy and individuality of online access, and an understanding that streaming, playlists, downloading and interactivity are just as much a part of listening life as tuning into a channel in a traditional manner.



Ryan Wigglesworth is the Hallé’s new Principal Guest Conductor

Ryan Wigglesworth has been appointed the Hallé’s Principal Guest Conductor. The conductor, composer and pianist, who first worked with the Hallé in 2010 on an NMC Birtwistle recording (which won a *Gramophone* Award in the Contemporary category), will succeed Markus Stenz. His appointment is for three years, from September 1, 2015.

Wigglesworth made his Hallé concert debut in December 2013, replacing an indisposed colleague to conduct Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique*. There followed a concert of Britten, Debussy and more Berlioz in February this year. Before he takes up his new role, Wigglesworth will work with the Hallé on a CD of his own music, again on NMC, in July.

‘I’m thrilled to be joining the Hallé as Principal Guest Conductor,’ Wigglesworth said. ‘My first experience of live orchestral music as a child was listening to the Hallé at Sheffield City Hall. In more recent years I’ve followed their astonishing work with Sir Mark [Elder] with great pleasure and admiration, and I look forward enormously to developing my own relationship with the orchestra over the coming years.’

Gramophone Award-winners return as custom-made CDs

Presto Classical, the Leamington Spa-based record retailer (and mail-order store), has recently launched a custom pressing services for deleted recordings. Manufactured on site under licence from the original labels, the Presto CDs are indistinguishable from the first releases – with full booklets and inlays.

One of the latest batches to be made available for re-pressing comprises 35 recordings that Universal pressed under the *Gramophone* Awards banner, all winners that cover almost the entire history of the Awards (which were launched in 1977).

Among the numerous highlights of the series, stylishly packaged in an eye-catching burgundy livery, are the complete songs of Samuel Barber (a DG set with Cheryl Studer, Thomas Hampson, the Emerson Quartet and John Browning), Emil Gilels’s *Hammerklavier* (DG), Peter Schreier and Sviatoslav Richter’s *Winterreise* (Philips)

PHOTOGRAPHY: GUY LEVY ILLUSTRATION: TIM KIRBY



An Award-winning Schwanengesang re-pressed

and collections of Scandinavian songs from Anne Sofie von Otter and Bengt Forsberg (DG), and Barbara Bonney and Antonio Pappano (Decca).

The discs cost £9.75 each (and are also available as downloads) from Presto Classical.

Martin Campbell-White receives RPS honorary membership

The artist manager Martin Campbell-White, responsible for nurturing the careers of conductors Sir Simon Rattle, Sir Andrew Davis, Daniel Harding, Edward Gardner and Robin Ticciati among many others, has been made an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society. He is the 131st recipient of the honour (Carl Maria von Weber was the first in 1826). Campbell-White started his working life with Ibbs and Tillett, joined Harold Holt in the 1970s and, with Lies Askonas, oversaw the merger of the two companies to form Askonas Holt in the 1990s. He stepped down as joint Managing Director when he reached 70 but continues in an advisory capacity.

Sony signs Britain's Got Talent soprano Lucy Kay

Lucy Kay, the soprano who cast a spell over the excitable live audience on TV's *Britain's Got Talent*, has been signed by Sony Classical in a 'multi-album deal'. The 25-year-old from Leicester studies at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and sang an abridged version of Puccini's 'Vissi d'arte' on the show on April 12, showcasing the technical potential in her attractive young voice and immediately securing the dumbfounded endorsement of the judges.

Bullock and Schiff are included in the Queen's Birthday Honours list

Pianist András Schiff has received a knighthood for services to music in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2014. Born in Budapest, Schiff took British citizenship in 2001. He has won two *Gramophone* Awards, the first in 1990 for his recording of Schubert's *Schwanengesang* with tenor Peter Schreier, the second in 1991 for Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, again with Peter Schreier (both for Decca).

Soprano Susan Bullock has been awarded a CBE. She said: 'I am absolutely thrilled to receive this honour. To spend my life doing something that I dearly love is a great privilege, and to be recognised in this way is not only very moving for me, but also wonderful for this fantastic art form which must be cherished at all costs.'

Also receiving honours are: John Berry (Artistic Director of English National Opera, CBE), Janis Susskind (Managing Director of Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers, OBE), Martin Binks (Conductor and Artistic Director of Leeds Symphony Orchestra, MBE) and Andrew Penny (Musical Director and Conductor of Hull Philharmonic Orchestra, MBE). Andrew Penny's recordings of Malcolm Arnold's nine symphonies for Naxos with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland were well received in these pages.



Soprano Susan Bullock receives a CBE

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PODCASTS

There are two fascinating podcast interviews from James Jolly this month. In the first, he speaks to **Iain Burnside** about the English composer and poet Ivor Gurney. Then, in the latest in our series of EFG Milestones Podcasts, he talks to conductor and harpsichordist **Rinaldo Alessandrini**, who is celebrating the 30th anniversary of the formation of his Concerti Italiano ensemble, about his approach to music and his new recording - a reconstruction of a Vespers Mass for St Mark.

NEWS & FEATURES

Two features from Berlin this month: in a special online report, Philip Clark meets with the team behind the Berlin Philharmonic



Orchestra's new record label and asks whether it represents a sea change in the classical recording industry; Martin Cullingford, meanwhile, reports from an event at the city's Apple Store that features conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen, the star of the new iPad advertisement.

THE GRAMOPHONE PLAYER

Hear tracks from the month's leading releases, including our Recording of the Month - Prokofiev's violin sonatas with Alina Ibragimova and Steven Osborne (Hyperion).

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Michael McManus invites nine leading Beethoven conductors to take us on a journey through one of music's greatest achievements

BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONIES

Classical music snared me for life through the symphonies of Anton Bruckner and Gustav Mahler, but

I soon came to understand why both those masters honed their compositional mastery under the immense shadow of Ludwig van Beethoven and his 'Nine'. Bruckner numbered only nine of his 11 symphonies, and poor, superstitious Mahler even tried to cheat fate by giving his Ninth a title instead of a number. It is increasingly to Beethoven that I return these days, but performances of all 31 (a contestable number, I know) of those works have bewitched, frustrated, fascinated, infuriated and delighted me on countless occasions; and continue to do so. All readers of *Gramophone* will understand!

For *Gramophone* in 2010, I had the pleasure and privilege of collecting the thoughts of 11 leading conductors on the 11 symphonic works of Mahler. What a privilege to have to make the time to dust down miniature scores and really listen to each symphony intently and with fresh ears.

In 2012, I spent a week in Tokyo with the wonderful players of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and their music director Mariss Jansons, my favourite conductor of today. I personally discovered Jansons – and came to admire him – first and foremost as an interpreter of Mahler's oeuvre. He was in Japan, however, to record not Mahler but the nine Beethoven symphonies, live in the superlative Suntory Hall. For one glorious week I enjoyed almost total immersion in that project and those masterpieces, attending rehearsals, sound checks, the concerts themselves and also the 'patch' sessions afterwards. I also spent a great deal of time with Jansons away from the concert hall, enjoying a remarkable amount of 'face time' during what would have been a gruelling schedule for a man half his age. I shall always treasure what he said to me: that it is, of course, impossible to speak of anyone as 'the greatest composer of them all', but that after two years of concentrated immersion in 'The Nine', Beethoven would, then and there, have been his unequivocal answer to that conundrum. The same touching sense of joy, humility and wonder comes across vividly here

as he discusses his favourite symphony of them all, the *Eroica*.

As in the Mahler series four years ago, each participant (three others also reappear: Riccardo Chailly, David Zinman and Michael Tilson Thomas) approached 'his' symphony in a distinctive way – sometimes with awe, sometimes whimsically-poetically, sometimes quite technically, always from the inside. They have all lived this music, again and again. They cast light upon themselves as artists, but also upon the life and works of one of the most extraordinary men (never mind musicians) with whom it has been our blessed lot to share human history. Beethoven was a sometimes radical, sometimes conservative bundle of explosive creative energy. He was a gifted entrepreneur and impresario; a man inspired by the ideals of *égalité*, *fraternité* and, above all, *liberté*, who came to despair of the self-glorification of political leaders who rode the waves of popular revolution but found themselves corrupted by power; a man who defied deafness and mid-life contemplation of suicide to spend his later years sanctifying and proclaiming the rights of man, nature and the indispensability of human companionship; and, above all else, someone who continually and fearlessly challenged boundaries, be they social, political, geographical or purely musical.

All the thoughts and insights of these musical masters of our own era shed fascinating light on this incomparable titan of the past. In every instance there is an available recording that illustrates their philosophy in notes. It has been immensely gratifying and rewarding to explore – or revisit – those recordings in connection with each essay. How extraordinary it was to discover that Zinman's blazing, perception-shifting recording of Symphony No 2 is now 15 years old; but it's also easy to understand why he feels no pressing need to re-record the piece, though he certainly continues to perform it. In Iván Fischer's *Pastoral* Symphony, you can smell the trees and breathe the bracing, negative ions after the storm. What an earlier generation would have made of Paavo Järvi's super-invigorating rendition of the Symphony No 8 can only be

guessed at; but they would certainly not have mistaken it for the work of Herbert von Karajan. They would, however, surely have respected the philosophy behind it, which Järvi sets out here with the utmost clarity and erudition. And Chailly is as incapable of expressing a dull sentiment as he is incapable of conducting a dull performance.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the entire undertaking, however, was the genuine pride and joy expressed by early-music pioneers at the influence they and their fellow innovators have had on 'mainstream' performances of this music. In a field of endeavour that is not always noted for generosity of spirit between its practitioners, how delightful to see the likes of

Zinman, Järvi and Chailly give such warm, sincere praise to the high priests of 'historically informed performance', many of whose insights and practices they have gladly assimilated.

This is all highly subjective, of course – what nine individuals had to say about nine very different masterpieces on nine different days. That's the point, though, isn't it? There is no perfect Beethoven, no ultimate, final, absolute Beethoven. We shall never know, for sure, whether his metronome was faulty, or the very model of its kind. This is a journey without end, through one of the greatest high-art achievements of mankind. I hope you enjoy reading these testaments as much as I enjoyed collecting them.

1

Sir Roger Norrington



Symphony No 1
Stuttgart RSO
Hänssler (F) CD93 084 (8/03)

2

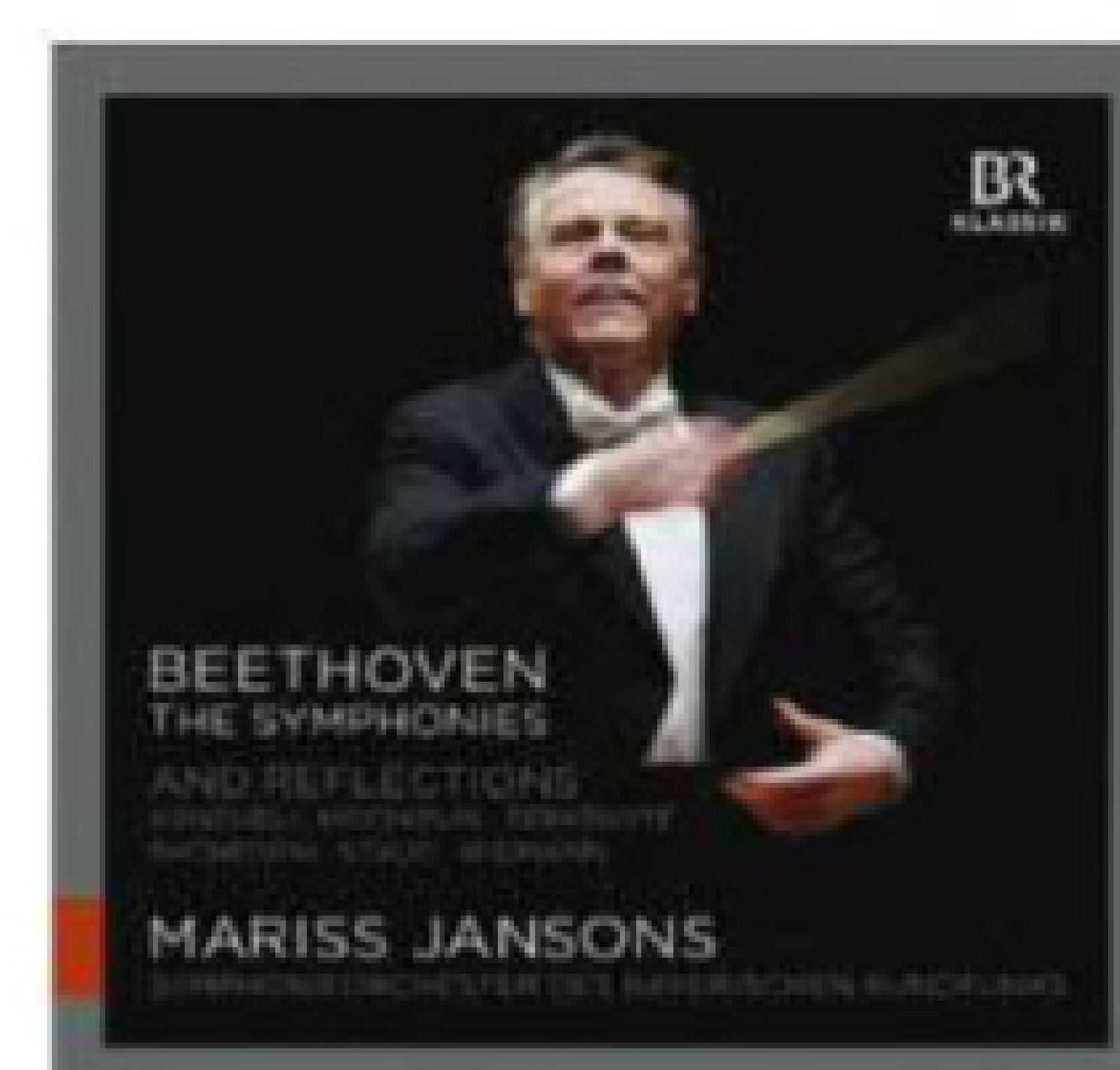
David Zinman



Symphony No 2
Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra
Arte Nova (S) 74321 63645-2 (5/99)

3

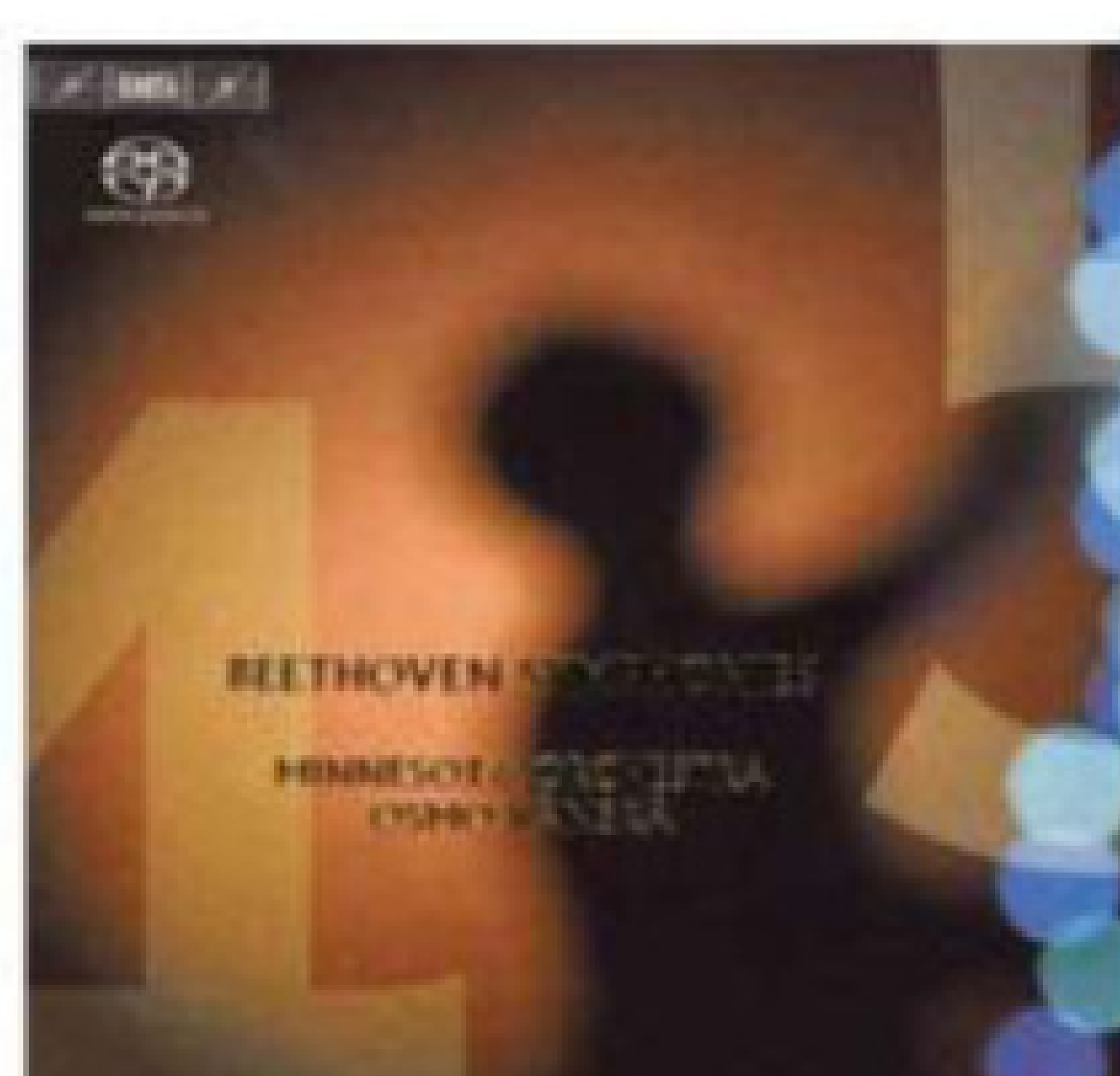
Mariss Jansons



Symphony No 3, 'Eroica'
Bavarian RSO
BR Klassik (B) (C) 900119 (12/13)

4

Osmo Vänskä



Symphony No 4
Minnesota Orchestra
BIS (F) BIS1416 (A/05)

5

Sir John Eliot Gardiner



Symphony No 5
ORR
SDG (F) SDG717 (1/13)

6

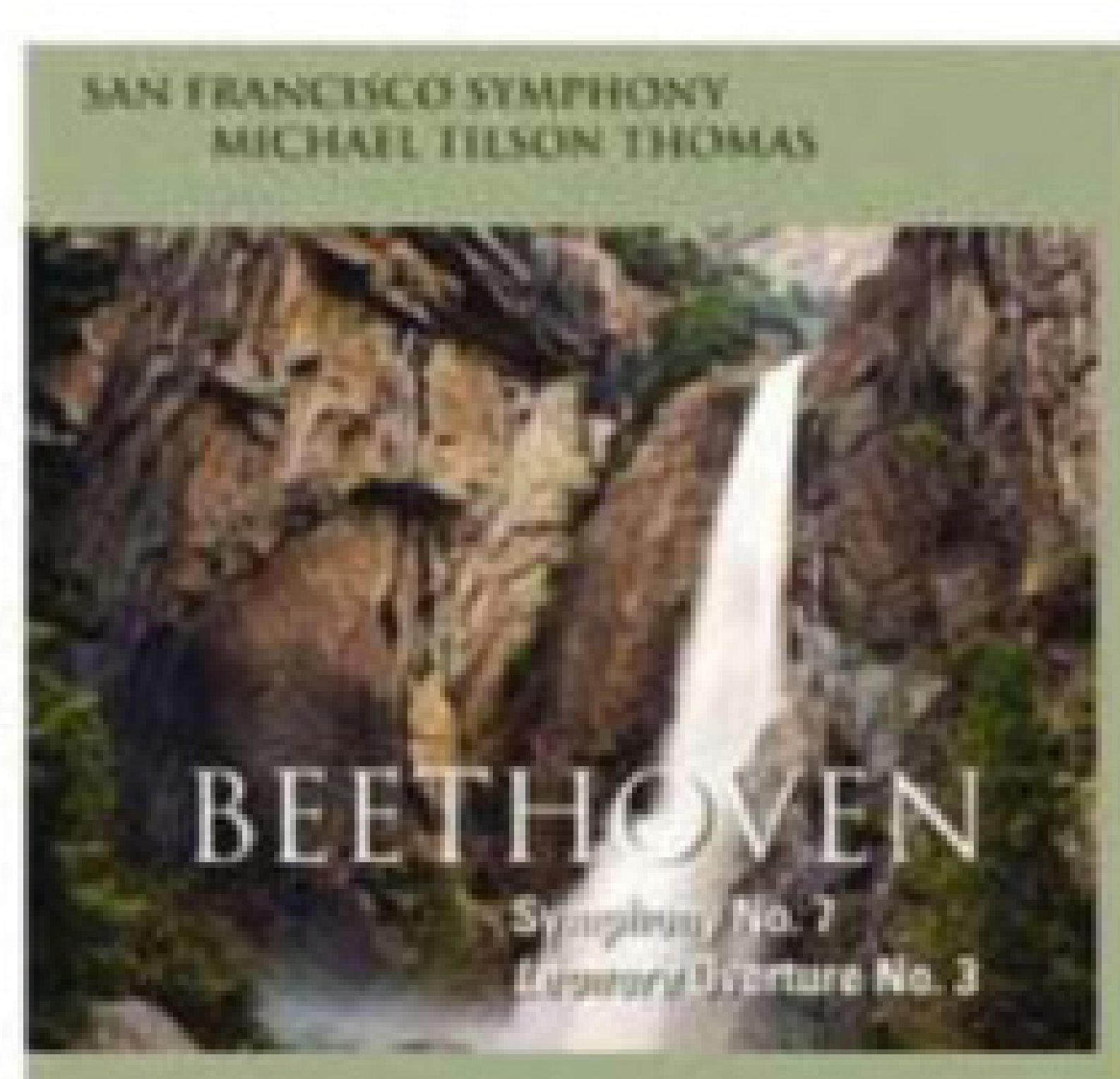
Iván Fischer



Symphony No 6, 'Pastoral'
Budapest Festival Orchestra
Channel Classics (F) CCSSA30710 (1/11)

7

Michael Tilson Thomas



Symphony No 7
San Francisco Symphony
Avie (F) SFSO054

8

Paavo Järvi



Symphony No 8
Kammerphilharmonie Bremen
RCA Red Seal (M) 88697 00655-2 (1/08)

9

Riccardo Chailly



Symphony No 9, 'Choral'
Gewandhaus Orchestra
Decca (F) 478 3497 (A/12)



Sir Roger Norrington

In his own words – the provocative conductor on wit and trickery in the least radical symphony

When Beethoven wrote his Symphony No 1, he was young and at the height of his powers as both a pianist and a composer of chamber music, but he had also lived more than half his life. This symphony couldn't have been written by Mozart, that's for sure, but what about Haydn? I guess you'd always think another hand was at work. Harmonically, it's a bit more stable than Haydn, a bit more Romantic, and in some ways more mischievous even, but it's still a lot 'safer' than what Mahler or Elgar did in their first symphonies. Beethoven uses a standard, late-Haydn orchestra, full-sized, with clarinets but nothing radical or distinctive, such as contrabassoons, piccolos or trombones. Maybe he thought he'd carry on writing in this style, until deafness made him rethink his future.

The piece is dedicated to Baron van Swieten, prefect of the Imperial Library, Vienna, who'd caused a tremendous amount of music to be written, including Haydn's *The Creation* and *The Seasons* and six symphonies by CPE Bach, whom Beethoven worshipped. There is a direct lineage from CPE to Beethoven, via Haydn.

Sometimes I'll listen to a performance of a Beethoven symphony to hear if people are following the rules, the 'road map'. I heard Mariss Jansons recently; even these top guys are taking note of what's going on down in the early music 'hobbit hole'. It's very nice when people are generous like that. I resist use of the word 'interpretation'. We must strive to get it right. Mostly people follow the metronome marks now, but they certainly didn't before. The metronome was a new invention

'I wasn't trying to be different; I was trying to get the music right – and it's exciting when that becomes mainstream'

in Beethoven's time, and we used to be taught (on absolutely no evidence) that his metronome was faulty. Beethoven would have seen a metronome moving, even if he couldn't hear it, so his markings are both incredibly illuminating and liberating.

People can be shocked by our work – but it's the speed at which horses gallop. The answer so often lies in dividing the bars into the correct number of beats. Know the rules: the quaver is never the unit of measure in Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven. It's only part of the note.

Even before the Jonathan Del Mar editions (Bärenreiter) it was possible to get a perfectly good performance if you knew how to read the code – getting the speeds, note lengths and phrasing right. You don't need a 'concept'. There was once a tradition of 'just playing' this music, but two strands emerged – Toscanini versus Furtwängler. I wasn't trying to be different; I was trying to get the music right – and it's exciting when that becomes mainstream.

We thought no one had done it before, but, as I subsequently discovered, René Leibowitz was using the metronome markings back in the 1950s. He was a pioneer like Pierre Boulez at Bayreuth. It's wonderful when something 'crazy' becomes the norm – especially when it sounds so good.

The first movement starts in the wrong key, not arriving in C for around 20 bars. It was meant to startle people. Beethoven was



Norrington: period-performance pioneer

a bit of a bear in the salons of Vienna, and there is a famous story of an occasion when he was asked to play something: he sat down at the piano, thought for a moment, put his arms down right across the keyboard, then stalked out. He never quite stopped doing that.

The Beethoven symphonies don't have genuinely 'slow' movements. Classical works generally don't. I remember playing Symphony No 2 under a famous German conductor who said, 'You have to suffer to play Beethoven slow movements.' The slow movement in the First Symphony can sometimes sound ponderous, but it's marked *Andante cantabile con moto*, so the emphasis must be on singing.

The third movement is marked *Menuetto*, but look at the metronome marking. Maybe this was a joke? To a German, a menuetto would have been something quite stately, but Beethoven here is suggesting something more like an *allegretto* or even *presto*; and there are precedents, in Mozart and the late-Haydn string quartets.

There is a very Haydnesque-joke-opening to the finale. It sounds as if it is going to be very gloomy and tragic, then it runs away and becomes totally brilliant. Wonderful stuff. People think of Beethoven as being dramatic, exciting, wild – but, when you listen, the harmonies and the orchestration are so incredibly beautiful all the time. Suffering is completely out of place, except perhaps in the Third Symphony.

Wit is the subject matter of the Classical period, so the metronome markings come as no surprise to those of us who know the Baroque. This is like sitting at a sparkling dinner table, listening to a group of very intelligent people. It's a marvellous idea. The idea of the dance is central and note length is crucial, so Beethoven was very, very careful about marking both *staccato* and non-*staccato* notes.

Beethoven never stopped being a Classical composer. He was a breeches man, not a trousers man. He's not an early Wagner; if anything, he's a late Haydn. Always he had that late-18th-century grace. He stumbled upon Romanticism. When he composed this symphony, he had a foot in each of two centuries. He lays down his colours: 'This is what I can do with a symphony...but in a couple of years I'll show you what I can *really* do.'

David Zinman

The Second Symphony is a bridge between two musical worlds, says the American maestro

The Second Symphony sets up some concepts the composer had already begun to think about in his early string quartets, in particular the Op 18 ones. His chamber music at this time – the piano sonatas, for instance, as well as the string quartets – was much more advanced than his symphonic work. He was breaking new ground all the time. This work is not as revolutionary as the Third Symphony, but it is nonetheless very far away from No 1. One of the strongest features is his repeated use of the rhythmic motif that opens the piece: ‘da daaaaah’ – a kind of *Hauptstimme* in rhythmic terms, an idea that makes pronounced reappearances in every movement of the work. This obsessive *Doppelschlag* idea runs through the piece and there are also a number of *subito pianos* and other sharp effects that must have been unfamiliar at the time. That doesn’t put it into the same class as the *Eroica*, which is much more about the composer’s inner life than this piece is.

The long first movement reminds us that composers are dealing more with compositional ideas – the sheer essentials of constructing a piece – than with emotional ones. This is a fabulous, Classical symphony and, I think, a brilliant, virtuoso piece – the kind of piece he had to write in order to move on. The use of development is quite extraordinary. It’s not a humorous piece in the Haydn sense, but there are certainly humorous effects, for instance in the *Scherzo*, which is a very unusual movement in all kinds of ways. It is a long piece, with a particularly long first movement, in which the use of the development section is very radical indeed.

This was one of the first Beethoven symphonies in which I tried to make the composer’s metronome markings work. The *Allegro con brio* in the first movement is marked 100, and people told me it wasn’t possible to play it that fast, but of course it is. The key is to think of the general pulse. If you get the big pulse right, the little pulses take care of themselves and the details really will come out. It’s all in the phrasing and the shaping. If you approach Beethoven’s metronome markings on the basis that he wrote in four, you will be running into a wall. It’s the tempos that make the piece work, that give it its character. The same is true of the quartets. If you change the tempos, you fundamentally change the character of the piece. If you respect Beethoven’s tempos, within a shade or two, you will capture the character of the piece correctly and its structure will also make sense.

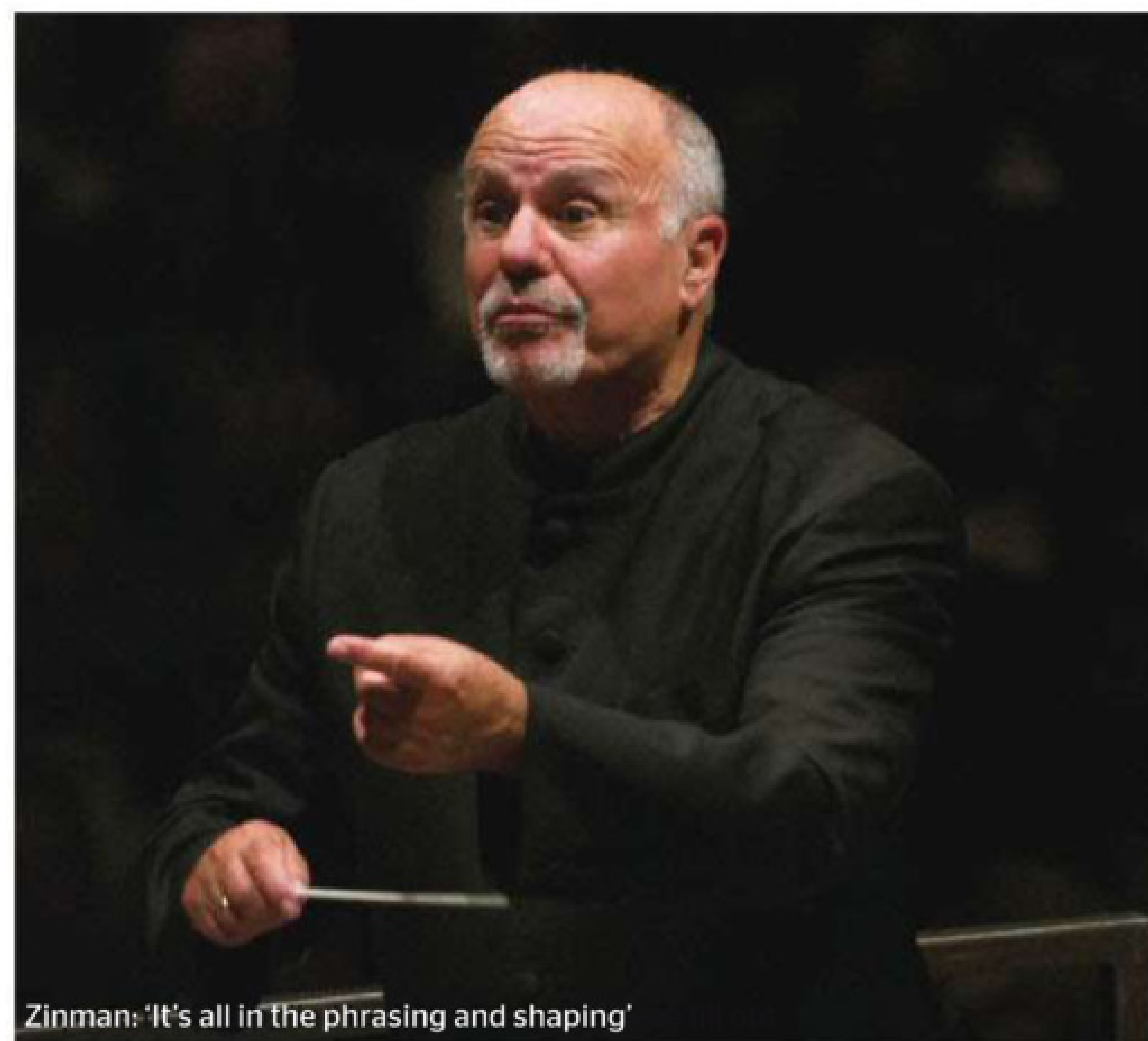
I also like to use natural horns. There’s a wonderful section in this first movement where the horns have their own tune, sometimes open, sometimes closed. The effect is so striking, if you get it right.

The slow movement is really not slow at all. It’s more of a Haydnesque *romanza*. With its metronome marking of quaver at 92, this movement was played too slowly for years. It can be played almost as a minuet, but, once again, characteristically of Beethoven, it isn’t really a ‘slow’ movement, despite its *Larghetto* marking. The *Scherzo*, with a marking of 100, sounds perfect when played as Beethoven intended. The finale is certainly very fast (152 minims to the minute) and, again, people told me it would be technically impossible to honour the markings.

In both the first movement and the final movement, Beethoven saves his energy for the coda. The coda of the opening movement should be one of the most brilliant and energetic endings possible. The finale ends with virtuosic brilliance too. All the ammunition is stored up for this. As he grew older, Beethoven became angrier and more curmudgeonly, more absorbed with his inner life. This piece was completed at around the time he first admitted he was losing his hearing and he wrote his Heiligenstadt Testament, but I still feel it’s strongly connected to his early works. Music did change completely with his Third Symphony, which opened up a new world, but this piece represents a bridge, an essential, indispensable bridge between the two worlds. It is a beginning but also a continuation.

‘The Allegro con brio is marked 100 and people told me it wasn’t possible to play it that fast – but of course it is’

In a sense, each Beethoven symphony is a partial antidote to the one that went before. I think the Second is more connected to the Fourth and, in turn, to the Sixth and the Eighth. A similar connection exists between the Third, Fifth, Seventh and Ninth symphonies. The Second Symphony was criticised in Beethoven’s lifetime – perhaps its temper was a little bit too obsessive for the tastes of the time. This style of composition influenced Schumann far more than it did Schubert, and it was part and parcel of what Beethoven was and is. This is a far angrier work than the First Symphony had been. Each of his symphonies was a world in itself, but they should not be regarded in isolation: they are always related to the other stuff he was writing at the same time.



Zinman: ‘It’s all in the phrasing and shaping’



Mariss Jansons

There's something new in all the symphonies – but for Jansons the 'Eroica' is truly revolutionary

Of course it is difficult to say which Beethoven symphony is my most beloved – all these symphonies are wonderful. But if you really press me to choose one, it would be the Third Symphony that sits even deeper than the others in my world. It must have been part of my conducting life for at least 40 years. I didn't want to mark my interpretation in some special or historic way when I recorded the piece in Tokyo in 2012, but all the same it was a time when I was very much connected to Beethoven.

I believe the Third Symphony represented a big step forward for Classical music, because in the First and Second Symphonies, yes, you feel it's Beethoven, but it's very connected to Mozart, to Haydn. Although you can already hear what I would call the special Beethoven spirit in the Second Symphony, it was the Third Symphony that brought a revolutionary change. It marked a complete change of direction for the symphonic repertoire. I refer both to the harmonic structure and to the design of the symphony. This was a revolution in every conceivable way. You could argue that a similar *scherzo* had already been written in the Second Symphony, but it was in this piece that Beethoven had a very monumental idea.

The second movement contains incredibly profound music, and the variations in the last movement represent a big step forward. The second movement is a funeral march, but above all it's a march. In this march, it is essential to recognise that each beat is a crotchet, not a quaver, because if you treat each

'It is not the first Romantic symphony – it is Classical, but with a very big idea at its heart and enormous musical language'

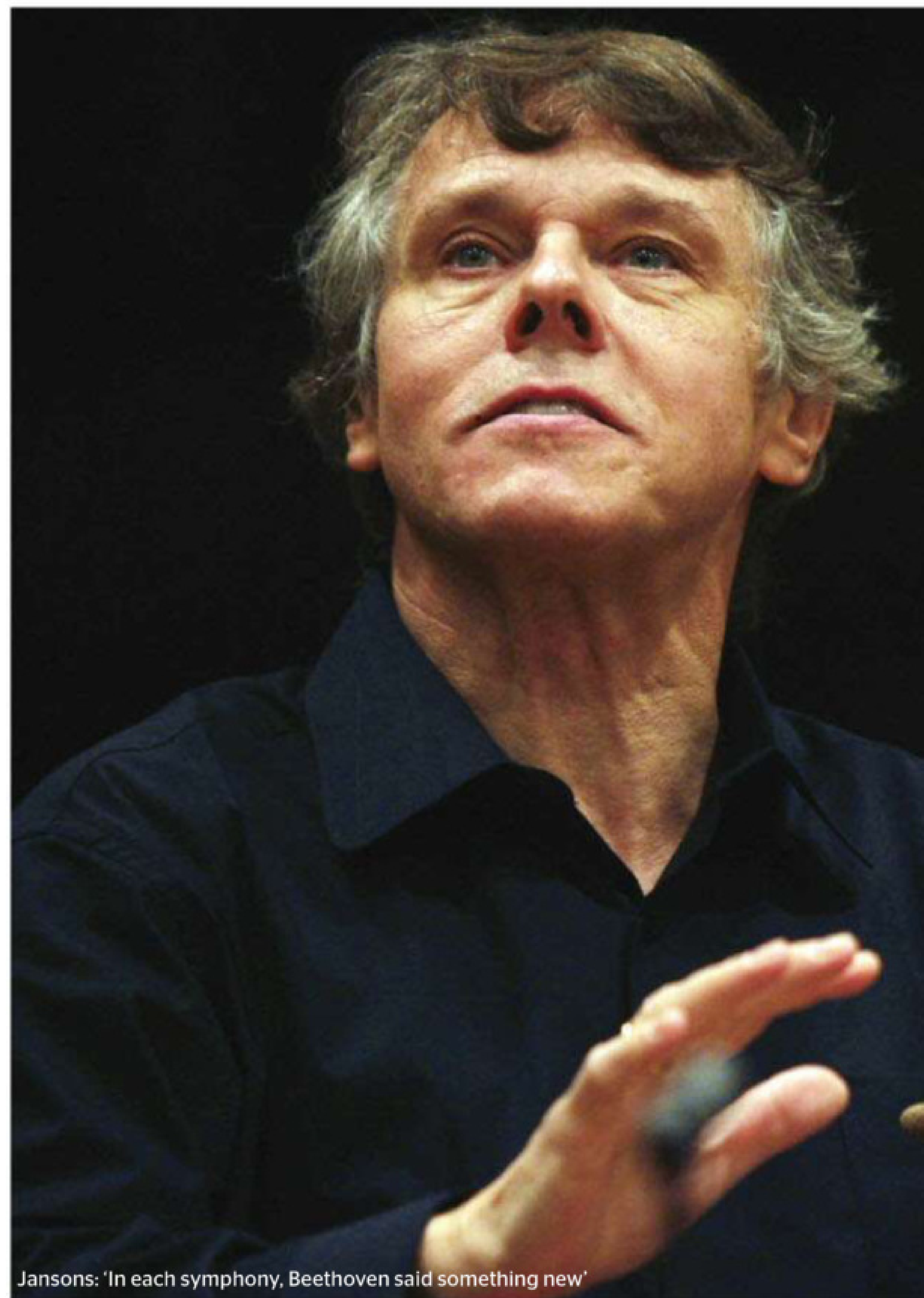
quaver as an individual step, as one beat, then you will end up taking the music incredibly slowly. You must also be careful to avoid making the music sound agitated, so you must take the music in two.

Perhaps this symphony is a little bit 'Romantic', say, in the third movement, because the horns give a kind of representation of nature, but I would not say it is the first Romantic symphony as such. For me it is Classical, but with a very, very big idea at its heart and enormous musical language. For example, in his finale, when Beethoven expresses the big culmination of the second theme using just three horns, double winds and strings, it feels as though he embraces the whole world, Mahler-style. It is unbelievable how this man could, with such limited means, achieve this spirit. It is the same orchestra that he'd used before, but with just one extra horn. What genius to introduce and fulfil big, profound and cosmic musical ideas with such limited resources. Sometimes composers use a mass of percussion and wind, but the content and atmosphere they produce are not as strong as this.

There are accidentals and chromatic notes scattered within the piece, but the first movement is clearly in E flat major and the second is in C minor, which is closely related. The third movement is again in E flat, so there is no very dramatic change

in tonality. In this respect, the piece is very, very Classical. Even between his First and Second Symphonies, there is a great difference. The symphony that followed this one, No 4 in B flat, is perhaps not so dramatic a symphony, but in each work he said something new in musical terms.

Even by the time of his Second Symphony, Beethoven had written his Heiligenstadt Testament, in which he stated that he did not wish to live any more. I have read it many times and always there are tears in my eyes, yet at the same time he wrote such unbelievable music, full of light and optimism and even humour. He was a very highly developed spirit, a man above our world, with enormous spiritual energy. Of course, he wanted to dedicate the piece to a great man, so perhaps this greatness of feeling and ideas in the musical language was there because he wanted to express great, revolutionary ideas.



Jansons: 'In each symphony, Beethoven said something new'

Although this is pure music, it does go beyond the traditional limits that were very common in Beethoven's time. It goes much wider. It is a gigantic piece. It is one of the greatest symphonies any human being has created. The music expresses so much that there are not enough words to express what I feel when I conduct this symphony. It is so great and so profound.

We can assume and imagine, but we can never know for sure, how this symphony was performed in the composer's time, because the contemporary accounts and markings from those who were with Beethoven are very difficult to judge. As far as the metronome markings are concerned, some continue to say that they are right and others say that they're not. We know from the letters to Czerny that when Beethoven himself conducted, it was not easy to maintain ensemble because he introduced very many *rubatos*. So too many conflicting instructions and pieces of evidence make it hard to come up with any definitive guide to performance. All I can say is that we try to follow what is written in the score, but I don't like dogmatic decisions based on assumptions about the past. In performance, even though this music goes through my inner world, it's not a question of what I want. Together, we just want to express the wishes and the music of the composer. Where is the truth?

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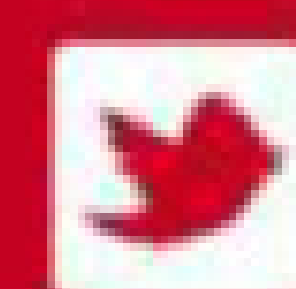
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Osmo Vänskä

For this Finnish conductor, the Fourth Symphony is just the 'shy guy' in a family of nine siblings

Of all the nine symphonies, for me it is No 4 that is looking back a little bit to the earlier, Viennese, Classical style. It is more connected to the first two symphonies than to the *Eroica*. That's how it speaks to me. I have always thought that the *Eroica* is the first big step to the Romantic era, the Fourth comes back – and we know what happened with the Fifth! I have often heard people talk of the 'big' Beethoven symphonies – Nos 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9; and the 'smaller' ones – Nos 1, 2, 4 and 8. That's all about form. If we are speaking just about music, then I believe these so-called smaller symphonies have the same amount of music in their symphonic bodies. Perhaps they are more like chamber music, but they therefore serve as a reminder of what a great composer of chamber music Beethoven was: less is not less.

What the conductor has to decide with all the symphonies is what the tempo should be. It is so often said that Beethoven's markings are impossibly fast and something was wrong with his metronome, but when I have performed and recorded the symphonies I have used my own personal system, based on no great idea or theory. First I try to take the tempos as they are written. If I cannot make them work, I take them down by 10 per cent. In most cases, this has been working very well

'The way to play this music is to have more dancing. The phrases should always be connected to rhythm and dance'

for me. Sometimes the metronome markings do seem to me to be too fast: there is time to play the notes, but not to breathe. In my recording of this symphony, the first three movements are perhaps 10 per cent behind the metronome markings, but the finale is very close to Beethoven's marking.

The structure of Symphony No 4 makes it closer to the Classical style. The orchestra is down to one flute and there is a slow introduction to the opening movement, though not to the final movement. This is a great piece of music, and even if it had not been written by Beethoven as part of such a cycle of works, I am sure it would have its place in programmes – without help from the other symphonies.

When my recording was made in May 2004, I had already conducted the new Del Mar/Bärenreiter editions with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. The scores had not been printed yet, but we obtained a list of the changes; it was a great thing for us – an opportunity to learn something that was more original. Then we started to do the recordings, which I think may have been the first to use these new editions.

When BIS asked me to do some recordings, my first reaction was to ask why? This cycle had been recorded so much, so why did we need more? The question mark was huge and I discussed the matter with many friends. How could we do a cycle that would have its own place among so many others? My only interest was in going back to the score, ignoring all those previous efforts and seeking to be as true to the composer as possible. Fortunately, we had a good producer with a good ear,



Vänskä: 'The score is more important to me than any tradition'

which is a great experience for everybody and a masterclass in itself. Possibly the most important feature of these recordings, for me, was the fact that the orchestra was performing better after every CD. It was a great school for ensemble-working and for sound; and a reminder that the way to play this music is to have more dancing. The phrases should always be connected to rhythm and dance, even in the slower movements.

The Beethoven symphonies are like nine children in the same family. All are individual and all are great, but with different characters. Some get more attention than others, but they still come from the same family. In my personal history there have not been so many performances of Symphony No 4. I have conducted it perhaps 20 times, but orchestras are always asking to do Nos 3, 5, 6 and 7. The music is great, however; especially in the last movement, where the wind solos are always a pleasure to listen to, in particular those for clarinet. The dynamic range is huge. This is very much connected to old music too, with the brass, the timpani and the horns doing really powerful things, but always in short bursts only, so they don't overdominate. I'm grateful to those of my colleagues who have contributed to our musical endeavours in moving away from the 'Romantic' tradition.

Although I played all these works when I was an orchestral musician, it is the score that matters to me, not those performances or earlier recordings. The score is more important to me than any 'tradition'. Toscanini wanted a very dramatic effect, not just beauty; and he never compromised anything. I like that idea very much. Once, in Minneapolis and also at Carnegie Hall, I paired Beethoven's Fourth Symphony with Sibelius's Fifth; and then Sibelius's Fourth with Beethoven's Fifth. This was not the decision of any musicologist – it was real life, practical life, where that combination worked very well and the Fourths were just the shy guys from two great families.



Sir John Eliot Gardiner

Beethoven's Fifth is, says the English conductor, a revolutionary symphony akin to a call to battle

You don't get anything more iconic than this symphony, especially its opening bars; and I don't need to elaborate on all the different interpretations assigned to those bars, whether it's 'Fate knocking on the door' or the 'V for Victory' Morse Code signal in the Second World War. I'm not sure how helpful any of that is. What does help, however, is to know a little bit about the political views and sympathies of Beethoven at the time of its composition. He went through various permutations of left-wingery and right-wingery, but at this point in his life he was really under the spell of the French Revolution, which appealed to his imagination and his sense of frustration. He was born in Bonn but now he lived in ultra-conservative Vienna, where any political message had to be encrypted. He was a great admirer of Luigi Cherubini, a composer of Italian origin who lived in France; and the famous theme that opens this symphony is derived from Cherubini's revolutionary *Hymne du Panthéon* of 1794. Its rhythms and even the melodic outline, to some extent,

lurk in the background of this symphony. Chenier's words for that piece were overtly revolutionary – 'We swear, sword in hand, to die for the Republic and for the rights of man' – and it was a heck of a thing for a German composer to encode, in a symphony without words. If this had come out into the open in a city as incredibly reactionary as Vienna, he would have been incarcerated, there's no doubt about it.

The extraordinary thing is what he does with that theme, because it's so unbelievably brief. It also starts on a cushion of a quaver rest, not on a downbeat. As a conductor, the challenge is to make sure that those three notes – the repeated notes – sound off the beat, so there's quite a technique involved in establishing the motto of the entire symphony. The theme is all-embracing and Beethoven uses it in extraordinarily concise and compact ways. I think it helps to know the words of the original Cherubini *Hymne*, where the second notes carry all the emphasis. I try to get the musicians to express that with their bows and their embouchures. There is an inexorable drive to



Gardiner: the end of the Fifth is 'epic, rousing and awe-inspiring'

this movement, an *élan terrible*, a propulsive energy akin to a call to battle.

The second movement is so unbelievably gentle and trouble-free in comparison. It has a delicious lilt to it in the melody that begins in the violas and cellos – a lissom, fragile quality which is so beautiful. It's tricky to pull off, because you have these dotted rhythms which still have to register to the ear of the listener even though they are *legato*. So you need a vertical energy that bounces the rhythms away from the horizontal, combined with the *legato* flow of the horizontal. This movement is the perfect riposte to those who think Beethoven is all just blood and thunder. Then the movement explodes into something majestic and almost militaristic in the brass – with a rousing energy. The series of variations that follows is very rich in fantasy and sheer accomplishment in the compositional process. Then a darkness falls, as the cellos provide an echo of the first movement, and then there's that marvellous moment when he speeds up. The *più molto* section near the end feels almost like a creature of some sort that is suddenly uncaged and allowed into the open air.

The third movement has no marking. It's *sui generis*. Beethoven here is claiming the right to be original, to be eccentric, to break away from the rules: this is a long way away from a Haydn minuet, for example. The opening is just a preparation for this tremendously assertive triple rhythm, which starts in the horns. Then he does something really brilliant. He writes a sort of a romp as a trio section, starting in the bass-line, almost throwing the gauntlet down. It feels so rhetorical, you sense there must be a text behind it. This theme feels not abstract but 'word-generated', but I have never been able to find a source for it. When he returns to the principal theme after the trio, there is a squeaky-door type of sonority in the strings

'The second movement of the Fifth is the perfect riposte to those who think Beethoven is all just blood and thunder'

and the clarinet has the main theme. It's frog-like in its witty, strange, eerie way; and serves as a preparation for one of the most astonishing passages in the whole of Beethoven.

The transition into the finale begins without a break, with an A-flat pedal and the timpani playing the median, not the tonic. It's suppressed. The tension mounts inexorably. This is like a furnace burning up and always puts me in mind of the end of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*. There is a triumphal shine and sonority – an *éclat triumphal* – as we go into C major. It's one of the most exciting moments in the whole of symphonic literature. He brings in three trombones, the piccolo and the contrabassoon, so you have an association with Turkish military bands. It all feels Napoleonic in its fervour. Imperceptibly, there comes another political motto, a reference to Rouget de Lisle's *Hymne Dithyrambique*, specifically the phrase 'Chantons la liberté'. It emerges gradually in the bass-line, passing to the trombones and the bassoons, and then to the violins. Then the whole orchestra is singing a hymn to liberty. Of course, being Beethoven, he doesn't stop there. He calls a halt to proceedings, goes back to the theme of the previous movement and does the whole thing again, this time with even more eruptive force, so you get a *da capo* that isn't really a *da capo*. It's epic; it's rousing; and it's awe-inspiring in the best sense of the term.



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Iván Fischer

For this conductor, the 'Pastoral' Symphony represents the individual's liberation through nature



Fischer: defies normality and convention

I have had the opportunity to perform full cycles of the Beethoven symphonies several times in the past few years and, when you look at the full group, it's the Sixth Symphony that stands out as an exception. It is literally an excursion: someone who usually lives in a large city takes the time to go into the countryside. It makes the piece extremely difficult in many aspects. We are very fortunate that Beethoven gave titles to the movements so, for instance, we know that the third movement is about the people on the land and folklore, and therefore it should feel rustic; and the final movement is about gratitude after a storm. These clear indications are unlike any other Beethoven symphony. How good it would be to have similar insights into, say, the Fourth, Fifth or Seventh Symphonies! Another, even more major aspect that makes the piece so special is that it is a relief from everyday life, an expedition and escape into the countryside or the woods.

The first movement sets the style, with continuous repetition of a very pleasant motif. The second movement then contains complicated repetitions of something very similar, which is most unusual from a compositional point of view. Beethoven started this repetitive technique in the Third and Fourth symphonies, especially in the Fourth, where he repeats the same musical material again and again, in different keys and different forms, but it's still a repetition. Many people believe it was the American minimalists who invented this, but no, it was Beethoven. In this symphony it receives a meaning for the first time, especially in those first two movements. We learn that it is not man but nature that creates this ostinato. When I perform it, I always feel that, were we to do it in a normal, conventional manner, we might miss something. It feels to me that the composer is saying, 'Let's do something else this time!'

Both in live performances and in my recording of the work, I have separated up the wind players, sprinkling them

amongst the strings. The idea originally came from the second movement, but I have used it throughout the piece. This way, the wind soloists are all surrounded by Beethoven's nature music but, most importantly, they are able to listen to their colleagues in the string sections, and hear their phrasing constantly. Both symbolically and practically, this adds to the sense of a change of scene. This approach sometimes gets criticised, for instance when we had a tree placed on the platform of the Royal Festival Hall and arranged the players around it. I did this to help underline the point that this is not an ordinary symphony. Most of Beethoven's works have the dual theme of tragedy and jubilation; and he was, of course, very preoccupied with ideas of freedom and liberation. The end of the Fifth Symphony is akin to the end of *Fidelio*, but this is a visionary, green symphony. It represents a different type of liberation, from beginning to end: a liberation by and through nature. The final happiness is a bit pantheistic, influenced perhaps by the philosophy of Spinoza.

Beethoven stepped out of the Classical tradition between his Second and Third Symphonies, but there is a relationship here with the 'pastoral' musical forms of the 18th century, a century that was just coming to its close. The Ninth Symphony is about the continuation of the French Revolution; and Beethoven found a way of putting into music what the crowd felt, the sense of freedom that came with storming the Bastille and throwing

'When I perform this symphony, it feels to me that the composer is saying, 'Let's do something different this time!'

away the aristocracy and the feudal system. The aspiration of being freed involved overturning the social order. That was freedom in the city; this symphony is about the very different freedom we can experience by leaving the city altogether. The Ninth Symphony literally did change the world by being so grand, so jubilant: it steps out of the boundaries of music. In the Sixth Symphony Beethoven explores a simpler kind of freedom, one involving total harmonic happiness. The *Pastoral* Symphony happens inside us. There is an internal, mental exercise at work, as the simplicity of nature creates strong feelings – and Beethoven was interested in those feelings that nature awakens in us.

At the beginning of the finale, as the shepherds express their 'happy and grateful feelings after the storm', the song begins with a solo clarinet and then a solo horn, creating a sense of individuality. I like to continue that when the first violin line initially appears with the famous melody of the finale, with the concertmaster creating a kind of 'naked melody', with the remainder of the strings joining in gradually. If the full group plays from the first note, of course that can work too, but sometimes one person can say more than a group of people can. Whereas Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is about the liberation of the crowd, the *Pastoral* is more about the liberation of the individual. And this is a liberation that comes about through the strength and beauty of nature.



Michael Tilson Thomas

San Francisco's conductor on the symphony that is defined by its extraordinary rhythmic vitality

With all these symphonies, it's worth reflecting upon the occasion for which they were written, in this instance, one of Beethoven's 'academies'. Beethoven's previous attempt at an academy-style grand premiere – comprising the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies – was not a great success, but he was a clever promoter of his own music and preferred the idea of a public concert to an evening in an aristocratic ballroom. He wanted to give the public something amazing and knew how to create a furore. In the same programme as the Seventh, *Wellington's Victory* gave the composer his most successful premiere, but the symphony, too, caused quite a stir and its second movement had to be encored.

The Seventh has more up-tempo music in it than any other Beethoven symphony, written for the smallest orchestra he had used in a while, without trombones and with only two horns. The opening positively proclaims that an extraordinary amount of this work will be in the key of A major. There is a certain tread, an underlying, procession-like pulse, to this first movement. It's almost minimalist. The transition – the opening tune of the *Allegro* – is presented quietly, as a flute solo, with a rather bucolic accompaniment and a vaguely equestrian feel. It is also quite obsessive about one particular rhythmic motif: a dotted quaver followed by a semiquaver, followed by a quaver. The themes of the exposition are elided one over another; the normal stages of a sonata are not covered. In other Beethoven symphonies, the structure is usually quite clear: the first theme

'In his improvising days, Beethoven would stupefy people. I think here he is using the orchestra to create the same effect'

ends here and the second begins here. There might be a little transition, but it's obvious where one theme ends and the next begins. Here, the themes are overlapped. In the development section, a slicing and dicing occurs with tiny bits of the main motif, in shifting keys and extremely different orchestrations. Ultimately, though, it all centres on a single harmonic place – using a 'pedal point', as Bach and especially Handel both do so effectively. Having wrapped you up completely in the excitement of all this, he comes to a sudden halt. There's an oboe solo, then we make our way to the recapitulation. There is a droning, chromatic bass-line, with a little tune superimposed by the fiddles, with a motif of a perfect fourth, a charming arabesque. It starts gently, becomes more capricious and then, as the listeners drop their guard, it turns quite obsessional.

In the second movement we shift into A minor. The winds proclaim the harmony with a mono-motivic quality that makes a profound impression. This is like a march and the controversy is whether it should be played *Allegretto* or *Andante con moto*. It is still quite common for this to be played at a rather monumental tempo, with a strong accent at the beginning of each bar, but it's quite clear from source materials that this is not what the composer intended. An early copyist made this mistake and we can see for ourselves Beethoven's furious reaction. There are



Tilson Thomas: respects what the composer intended

three very specific types of articulation set out, which describe a two-bar phrase. This music draws attention by means of understatement, including the use of echo phrases. We head through the string section, there is an almost organ-like, radiant moment in the winds, then a little fugue on the main motif. It ends just as it began. Things don't get much more simple or perfect. I think this movement appeals because it is simple and expressive, like a perfect scene in an opera.

In the *Scherzo* in F major there is a slight element of hilarity, a quality of laughter. Chains of falling scales jump back, even higher; and all kinds of little games are being played. This movement is designed to confound you and surprise you, in a very nice way. The trio is a kind of pastoral drinking song. Everything in this symphony is very orchestral, but this is the most self-consciously virtuoso movement. The big decision is how to treat all the 'hairpins'.

The finale has the highest energy of all. Beethoven uses a *sforzando* marking, almost mimicking a certain style of peasant fiddle playing. The main theme has obsessional repeats. It's march-like, military and up-tempo. Two elements are interchanged – orchestration and some extreme excursions of key, even into C major. There is a big contrast between the extreme treble and the extreme bass. Even more than the others, this movement is designed, I believe, to demonstrate sheer physicality. The development section has fugitive keys and moments of delicacy, but then we return to the big fiddle tune, punctuated by extremely loud, periodic trumpet and drums fanfares. Again, there is obsessive, chromatic droning in the bass-line, as the violins and violas exchange, at a very extreme dynamic, the fragments of the fiddle tune. The overwhelming vitality draws an obvious parallel with the end of the opening movement. In his improvising days, which were pretty much over by this time, Beethoven would sometimes stupefy people, playing for an hour or more with incredible energy. I think, here, he is using the orchestra to create the same effect. Beethoven is not programmatic, but his music is always distinctive and recognisable; and always, somehow, he succeeds in examining some different part of us and our nature.

Paavo Järvi

This maestro believes the Eighth still has the power to confuse musicians and academics alike

It's a puzzle, isn't it, this symphony? When we think of Beethoven, we always think of music with great depth and profundity. So is it really possible that, after his Seventh Symphony and before his Ninth – those great, epic works – such a genius could write a 'little Classical symphony'? It looks and sounds like some kind of a joke and that's exactly what I think it is. It's the joke of a great genius. It is Beethoven, after all, but you cannot treat it like those other works, because he is taking an unexpected step in an unexpected direction. It is completely wrong to try and play this piece in the style of the Ninth. I have realised that to apologise in any way for the sudden change of character and quirkiness of this piece would diminish it. There are still so-called Beethoven 'specialists' who are trying to find profound, inner meaning in this symphony. So far as the tonality of the piece is concerned, it shares a key signature with the *Pastoral* Symphony, but, if there is any profound connection between the two works, I cannot find it.

In symphonies such as the Seventh and the Ninth, there can be a certain leeway to hide behind certain Romantic and expansive gestures. Not so with the Eighth. This is a wonderful little gem, but you do encounter in it technical and musical challenges. It's not a piece that works unless everyone is convinced about the common interpretation. The direction must be agreed. You need an orchestra that possesses extreme virtuosity, which is also convinced about a shared approach and interpretation. Otherwise the piece will appear clumsy, out of breath, endlessly speedy – or just messy. It's a great challenge and, in my relationship with this symphony, I feel my journey is never complete. Along with Schumann's Symphony No 3, I find this symphony to be one of the hardest pieces in the repertoire to start. I always ask the musicians to be ready to play when I am still backstage, so we can begin the instant I arrive on the podium. It's a practical thing. It's essential to capture as much energy as possible in that first phrase.

If you study Beethoven's metronome markings, you learn to treat 'adagio' in a less literal, more conceptual, context. In fact, the key to this piece as a whole has been to put trust in Beethoven's metronome markings. He was deaf, but he was not stupid. He knew how to work a metronome. There are so many interesting and important details and it requires remarkable agility to capture the speed, the nuances and the colours. It then follows that you cannot play this piece with a large symphony orchestra. Even with a smaller group it is difficult, which is why I will conduct this work only with orchestras with whom I have an established relationship. It's not enough for them to 'meet me halfway'. If the musicians are unwilling – or, more likely, unable – to play it with the necessary dexterity, the piece simply won't work. They need a chamber music attitude, and that means adequate rehearsal time is essential too. To achieve the necessary lightness and precision, a shift in mentality is needed. If you focus just on beauty and slow the piece down in the style of music of the mid-20th century, you might gain certain, beautiful moments, but you will lose the piece. This is not about making a beautiful sound, but neither is it a matter of achieving cold precision.

I discovered the type of Beethoven in which I am now involved through Sir Roger Norrington, whom I regard as one of the great musical revolutionaries. None of us are in music because we want to change anything. It is simply that a lot of traditions don't make sense. For me, the interesting and important process is not setting out to convince other people of anything: it is making the piece work for you, yourself. You must build a coherent form. I grew up in a conductor's family; and my introduction to the symphonies of Beethoven came from recordings by Bruno Walter, Klemperer and Furtwängler. I first heard this music as incredibly Brahmsian, Romantic and beautiful. Performances by the old masters all treat the slower movements in particular with the ears and mind of someone who has already heard

'The key to this piece has been to put trust in Beethoven's metronome markings. He was deaf, but he was not stupid'

Wagner. There was a historic misunderstanding. The kind of slow movement we tend to expect from someone after Wagner simply didn't exist in Beethoven's time. If you listen to Bruckner, under the real Bruckner conductors such as Wand, Jochum or Harnoncourt, those slower movements too make more sense when they are not ritualised. When I first played a recording by Roger Norrington, at the beginning I thought there was something wrong with my machine. I was literally speechless. At first this approach seemed to me absolutely wrong, but at the same time exhilarating. Then I learned about 'Historically Informed Performance' and I am glad to say, we are very 'HIP' now!



Järvi: was inspired in his interpretation by Sir Roger Norrington



Riccardo Chailly

The Italian conductor believes that, in his final symphony, Beethoven reached beyond humanity

My connection with this symphony goes back to my time at the Milan Conservatory, but I never dared to conduct such a masterpiece until 1990, when I was the Music Director at the Musicale Communale in Bologna. I started conducting Beethoven with the First Symphony when I was not even 20 years old, but I postponed the *Eroica*, the Fifth and the Ninth for as long as I could. The ones that gave me courage to start were the Fourth and the Eighth. I still remember like it was yesterday the feeling almost of being guilty, to have had the courage to get close to such a piece as the Ninth – and, at the same time, the joy of being inflamed by the power of that music. Unforgettable. Since then I have conducted the piece regularly. First with the Verdi orchestra in Turin in the late 1990s I imported the tradition (which started in Leipzig) to play the symphony at the end of every year. Now it is the Beethoven symphony I have conducted the most.

Then my destiny of life brought me to Leipzig where that tradition started under Arthur Nikisch in 1918, continuing even during the war years. The Leipzig connection is strong. Schiller was living in Leipzig when he composed the text 'An die Freude'. You can even visit a museum now and see the corner where he sat and wrote. The Gewandhaus Orchestra was the first to premiere the entire cycle. I am proud of the way in which the orchestra showed flexibility and a willingness to change gear in terms of pacing the Ninth. I have always sought to respect the aesthetics and the roots of the past, never to ignore or neglect them, but still to find a new frame of interpretation.

I could not even think to push myself into the adventure of recording the Beethoven symphonies without being familiar with Arturo Toscanini's approach – for me, he was the first modern interpreter. If you compare him to, say, Willem Mengelberg, Toscanini is in a totally different universe. Then there is the unforgettable experience of hearing Sir John Eliot Gardiner, a confirmation of how the Toscanini tradition of the late 1920s could, in this new century, have its own independent and proper life, as a need, as a must. Gardiner proved that this change of gear was necessary and I try to follow that line, but in my own, different way. He did it with

a smaller orchestra and original instruments; we did it with a larger ensemble, but with many elements in common, in terms of transparency, articulation, extreme care for the dynamic range and respect for the metronome – whose markings were considered, for perhaps a century, to be crazy.

The Ninth Symphony was the principal victim of the 'old school' and there certainly are markings which really do provoke discussion: I think of one in the *Scherzo*, one in the last movement. In the first and third movements matters are pretty clear, but, of course, you have to change radically your approach to those movements in terms of tempo. It must all make sense, within the unitary vision of the piece. The second movement has a trio, where the metronome markings really force you to

think and to make your own decisions. The same is true of several spots in the finale. The liberty taken by renowned Beethoven conductors, not only in terms of tempo choice but also in transitions between

moments in the finale for instance, would disguise the clarity and the rigour that Beethoven sought to impose on the conductor.

I see this work not just in its own right, but also as the conclusion of a major opus. Like with Mahler, I consider 'Beethoven's Nine' as being like one huge span of time, from the beginning of the first work to the end of the last. The Ninth, being the conclusion, needed the extra element of

'The music searches not for an end but for an endless development. It is like a labyrinth that never finishes'



Chailly: the Ninth is 'unforgettable'

the vocal presence, which made so much sense and somehow provoked even critics at the time, being at first too modern as an idea – one wouldn't have associated the word *sinfonia* with a vocal element. If you check what followed, such as the *Lobgesang* of Mendelssohn or Mahler's Second Symphony, you can see the effect of what Beethoven provoked. He prompted the births of new masterpieces. Given the stage he had reached in his life, I believe he felt that this should be something beyond human beings. He certainly achieved that, pushing the poor sopranos with the mad tessitura in the finale, which is so high and exposed. That is what makes this piece, every time you perform it, transformative for the musician and for the public.

The D minor opening movement is probably the most tragic opening movement of a symphony. I have a feeling that this represents another long journey from darkness to light. I always finish that first movement feeling completely shaken up by the tragedy and drama. You need a few moments to establish inner serenity before you switch to the joy of the *Scherzo*. Such a contrast, one against the other, is almost Mahlerian. Obviously the greatness of the *cantabile* melody of the third movement is one of the truest examples of the so-called 'endless melody', along with the slow movement of the *Reformation* Symphony of Mendelssohn and in the Second Symphony of Schumann, as well as in symphonies by Brahms and Mahler. This music does not search for an end; it searches instead for an endless development. It is like a labyrinth that never finishes.

In a way I cannot wait to start the fourth movement. I have always approached that *attacca*, but the timpani have to change their tuning very quickly between those movements, so the agreement is that, before I give the upbeat, which is so dramatic with that 'out of tune armoury', the timpanist has to give me a nod, as quickly as possible, to let me know he's ready. I don't think it is right to give silence after the slow movement. There are conductors who wait, but really I cannot. That meditative, spiritual mood needs to be broken up. It is so long and so highly developed, with its reprise and variations, that I do need to break through. I prefer the listener to think back to it once the entire symphony is over. Beethoven wants to move on – 'Nicht diese Töne!'. You feel the pain and violence, almost physically, of that opening chord. It's a very crude dissonance. Then the celli and basses start their long monologue. It's like the Second Symphony of Mahler. Both rationally and irrationally, they take charge.

This year we shall come for the penultimate night of the Proms with Beethoven's Ninth, on the Friday night before the Last Night. This will be the third occasion on which we shall have brought the Ninth to London together. We will present the symphony with an excellent piece by Cerha that we commissioned in Leipzig, which was inspired by the intervals of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth – the open fifths. I know the Proms public loves adventures and surprises, and being challenged; and this piece really challenges the audience.

When Mendelssohn was Gewandhaus Kapellmeister, he conducted the Beethoven symphonies year after year. Robert Schumann, a great friend of Mendelssohn, was a leading music critic in the city at the time. The critics generally raved about Mendelssohn as a conductor, but Schumann in particular was always critical of his choice of tempos in Beethoven, criticising him for being too fast. This criticism, to my mind, is the proof that Mendelssohn was one of the earliest advocates of what we now think of as both 'modern' and 'authentic' performing practice in these works. ⑥

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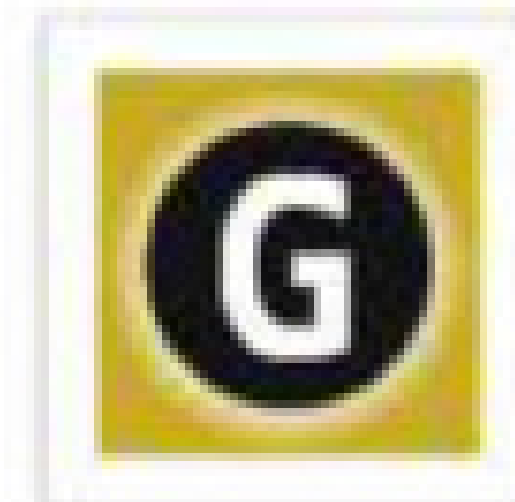
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Recording of the Month

Geoffrey Norris is thrilled and chilled by a new recording of Prokofiev's violin sonatas



Prokofiev

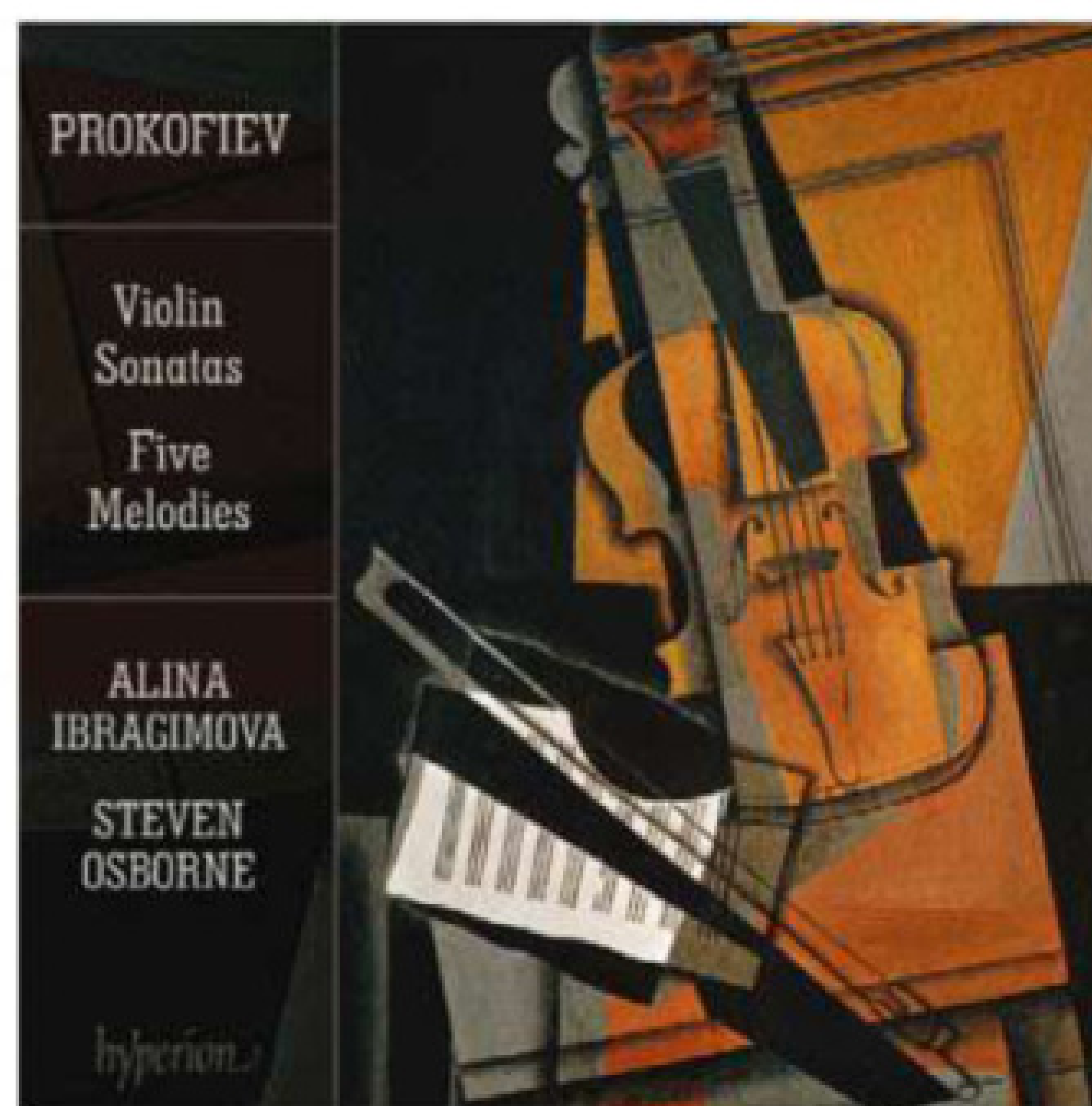
Violin Sonatas - No 1, Op 80; No 2, Op 94*bis*.

Five Melodies, Op 35*bis*

Alina Ibragimova *vn* Steven Osborne *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67514 (61' • DDD)

Writing in 1954, David Oistrakh, who was close to Prokofiev during the gestation of both the violin sonatas, made an interesting comment about the performer's responsibilities in playing his music. 'It is music,' he said, 'in which nothing can be omitted, not a single turn of the melody, not a single modulation. It requires the strictest attention to every detail of expression, a fine, but not over-refined, execution of each individual intonation, as in the case of well-enunciated singing.' To judge from this absorbing disc of the two sonatas and the *Five Melodies*, Op 35*bis*, Alina Ibragimova and Steven Osborne have embraced the very essence of Oistrakh's remarks. There is a real sense that their responses come from deep within the music's substance. Just as Oistrakh also advised that 'the best performance of Prokofiev's music, or of any other good music for that matter, is one in which the personality of the performer does not obtrude in any way', so it is the personality and voice of Prokofiev that shine through in Ibragimova and Osborne's playing, with the traits that lend both sonatas their individuality of expression securely enshrined, defined and projected.



'There is a real sense that Ibragimova and Osborne's responses come from deep within the music's substance'

The Second Sonata, the one that Prokofiev reworked from his D major Flute Sonata at Oistrakh's behest, has generally had the more welcoming reception. However, the First, begun in 1938 but put aside until 1946 and interrupted by work on other major projects including *Alexander Nevsky*, *Cinderella* and the opera *Semyon Kotko*, is by far the more thought-provoking. Why is it so dark, so disturbing, so shot through with anxiety, when the D major Sonata is, by comparison, bathed in sunlight? Whether or not this was an allusion to the dead of the Second World War or to those who had disappeared during the Stalinist purges, the sense of

desolation and disquiet is something that comes across powerfully in Ibragimova and Osborne's performance. From the very start, they prepare the ear for a shrouded atmosphere: Osborne's deep-toned octaves in the bottom register of the piano establish an enveloping aura of the sepulchral, with Ibragimova's wisps and gasps of bleached violin timbre adding to the sense of foreboding. Later on in the movement there is a passage that Oistrakh singled out for special mention in his 1954 tribute to Prokofiev. The piano has sequences of ethereal chords in the upper register while the violin is scurrying up and down the fingerboard in gusty shadows. Prokofiev, according to Oistrakh, likened this effect to 'the wind in a graveyard', and, Oistrakh added, 'after remarks of this kind the whole spirit of the sonata assumed a deeper significance for us'. With Ibragimova and Osborne you can appreciate just what Prokofiev meant. Quite why he meant it to be like that we can only surmise; but with Ibragimova and Osborne, this wind in a graveyard sends an apt, icy shiver of apprehension down the spine.

When Oistrakh spoke of 'a fine, but not over-refined, execution of each individual intonation' in the performance of Prokofiev's music, he was not referring to the necessity for correct tuning (though that in itself is an obvious



Alina Ibragimova and Steven Osborne recording the Prokofiev violin sonatas at Henry Wood Hall in London, July 2013

advantage) but to the Russian concept of *intonatsiya* that is deemed to lie at the heart of the creative process and, by extension, of musical performance. It is a difficult term to define succinctly, as was discovered by the Russian musicologist Boris Asafyev in his classic hundred-plus-page book on the subject in the 1940s, but it underlines the significance of the emotional, expressive values harboured within music's component elements of rhythm, pitch, interval and so on. It is a concept with which Ibragimova will have

grown up and it can be appreciated in her searching approach to Prokofiev's music here, an approach that Osborne intuitively with like-minded inflection, colouring and shaping. The bleak atmosphere of the opening *Andante assai* of the First Sonata is given further definition by the dissonance and drive of the *Allegro brusco* second movement and by the strange, unearthly weightlessness of the *Andante* third, at the end of which Ibragimova's trills hover hauntingly on the edge of audibility.

To be sure, there are moments in the Second Sonata where the luminous lyricism is undermined by more astringent, preoccupied thoughts, and Ibragimova and Osborne are fully aware of their interpretative roles when that is the case, but they also find the seam of sanguine spirit that courses through the music. Different again are the *Five Melodies* that Prokofiev arranged for violin and piano from the wordless songs he wrote in 1920 for the Ukrainian-born soprano Nina Koshetz, who was soon to create the role of Fata Morgana in the Chicago premiere of *The Love for Three Oranges*. She also had a close association with Rachmaninov, who dedicated his Op 38 songs to her in 1916, and there was something about her vocal quality and personality that inspired both composers to write music of a particular hue. In the case of Prokofiev there are, on occasion, traits that were to imbue his later music; but there is also a dream-like, sometimes passionate, sometimes rarefied impulse that Ibragimova and Osborne convey with exactly the penetrating insight that is manifest throughout this remarkable disc. **G**

Listening points Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

Track 1: Violin Sonata No 1, 1st movt, opening

The very opening, up to 1'01", with the piano's tomb-black bass octaves and the violin's chill whispers, immediately sets the sonata's solemn tone.

Track 1: Sonata No 1, 1st movt, 4'31"-5'32"

'Like the wind in a graveyard', Prokofiev's description of the violin's spectral flurries, is precisely the image suggested here.

Track 2: Sonata No 1, Second movt, from 1'59"

The intensifying dissonance here and the sharp *staccato* stabs on violin and piano stress the music's sinister, skeletal starkness.

Track 6: Five Melodies - No 2, opening

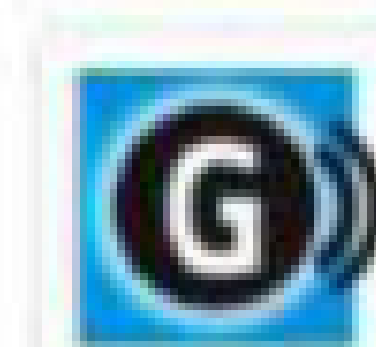
The piano's liquid textures and the violin's quietly voiced lyricism (start 1'15") beautifully identify the music's origin in a vocalise.

Track 8: Five Melodies - No 4

'Light' and 'playful', Prokofiev's markings in this minute-long miniature, are qualities realised here with the utmost subtlety.

Track 11: Violin Sonata No 2, 2nd movt, from 1'40"

Within the *Scherzo*, the abrupt fluctuations of mood between light and shade are characterised with vital spontaneity.



Orchestral



Bryce Morrison on Mendelssohn concertos and more from Leipzig:

'Ashkar's is an art that disguises art. All these performances lift the spirits, negating all notions of sentimentality' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 38**



David Fanning reviews new recordings of Nørgård symphonies:

'The premiere recording of No 8 is a must-have, and not only for followers of Nørgård' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**

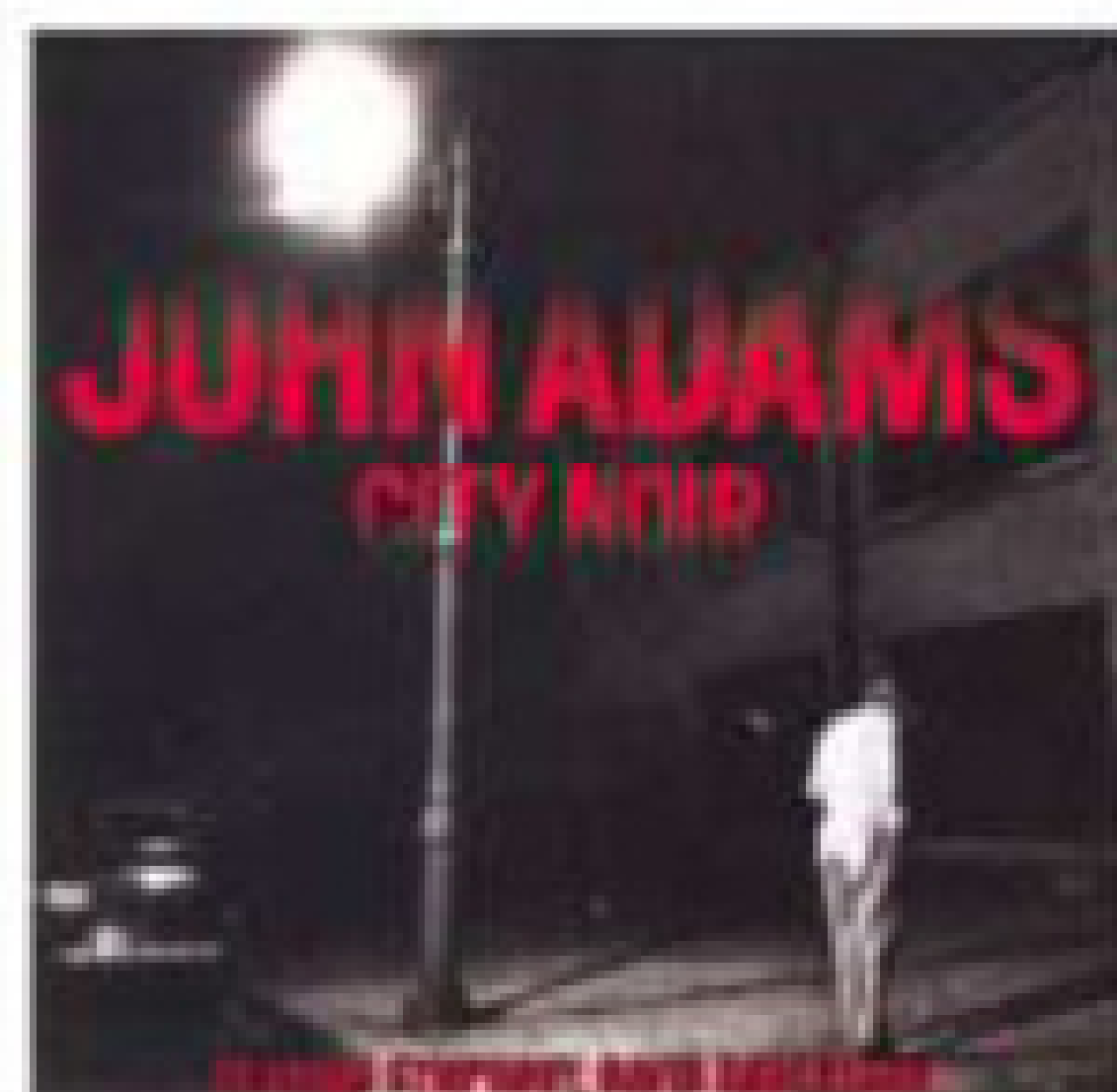
Adams

City noir. Saxophone Concerto^a

^aTimothy McAllister *alto sax*

St Louis Symphony Orchestra / David Robertson

Nonesuch © 7559 79564-4 (63' • DDD)



John Adams has described *City noir* as a 'homage' to the California experience.

Its landscape and culture form the backdrop to this large-scale three-movement work, especially the ambience and mood of Los Angeles films noir from the late 1940s and early '50s. But, as one might expect from a composer of such eclectic proclivities as Adams, the musical frame of reference is much wider. There's more than a hint of *Doctor Atomic* in its explosive opening, full of scurrying strings, rasping brass and pounding percussion. It then lurches into 1950s jazz. But it would be incorrect to describe *City noir* as merely 'Doctor Jazz meets Atomic Bebop'. Adams often draws on the dark, dramatic and suspense-filled orchestrations of the film noir genre, replicated with astonishing accuracy on this recording by the St Louis Symphony and David Robertson, and it is this sound world that cuts through the many layers of musical reference. It makes *City noir* both an exciting yet curiously impenetrable work. One for the desert island, perhaps.

The Saxophone Concerto is hardly easy listening, either, but engages on a more immediate level. Adams imparts a lighter touch to the orchestration here, mainly, one suspects, in order to support the solo alto saxophone's sinewy lines, played with wondrous dexterity by Timothy McAllister. The interplay between soloist and orchestra is razor-sharp from the opening exchanges, in fact. The first movement is probably not Adams's strongest but there's a wonderfully devilish dance towards the end of the second movement, and the third accelerates energetically towards a rapturous close. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

JS Bach

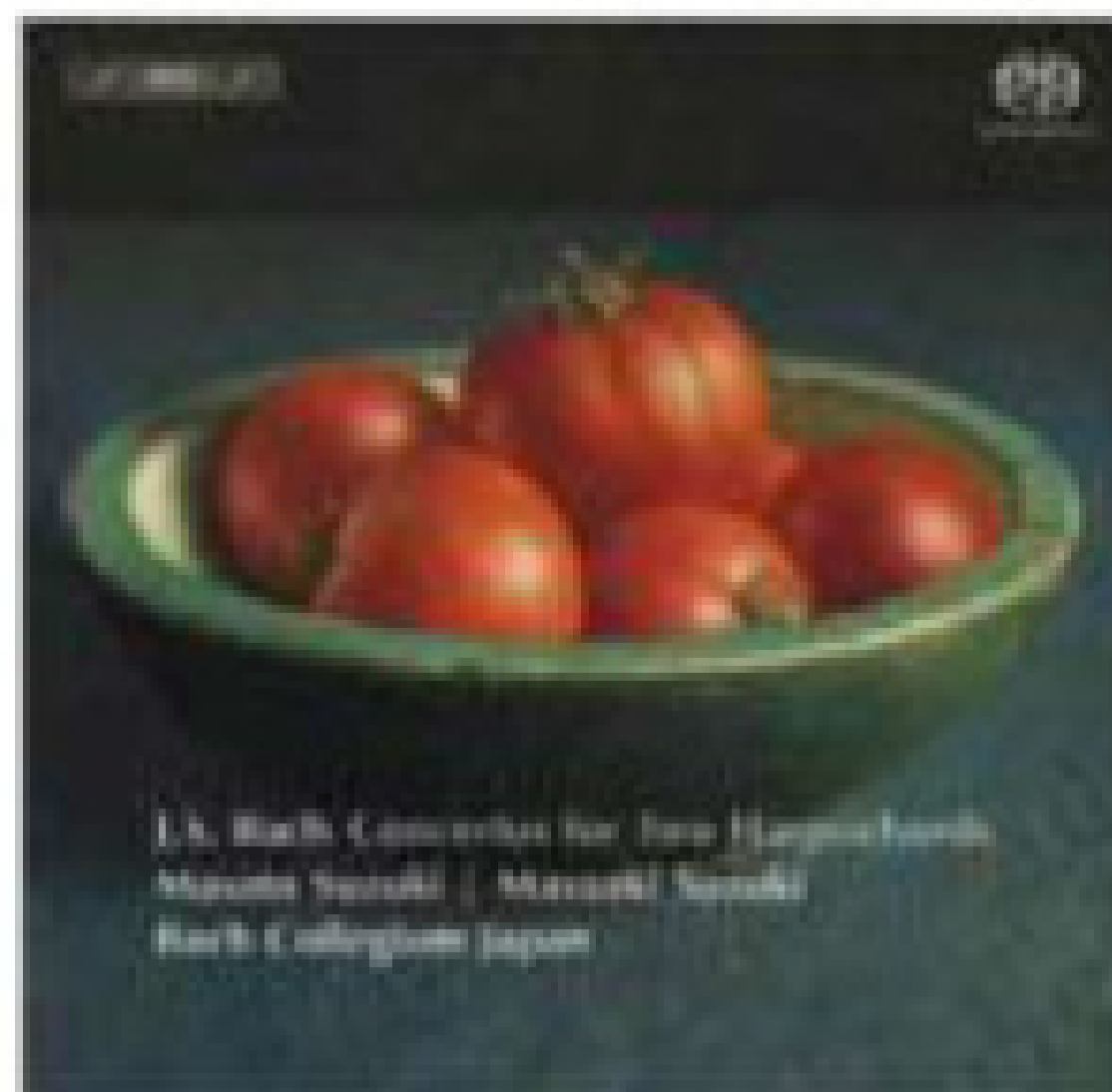
'Concertos for Two Harpsichords'

Keyboard Concertos – BWV1060; BWV1061; BWV1062. Orchestral Suite No 1, BWV1066 (arr Masato Suzuki)

Masaaki and Masato Suzuki *hpds*

Bach Collegium Japan

BIS © BIS2051 (71' • DDD/DSD)



The two-keyboard idiom only occasionally catches our attention but when

it does it's always original and telling, be it Bach, Mozart or Bartók. Here, Masaaki Suzuki and his son, Masato, remind us of the special merits of a Bach sub-genre: the three concertos for two harpsichords from Leipzig, or more specifically from the years after 1729 when the composer directed the meetings of the Collegium Musicum.

All four pieces are transcriptions of a kind, the two C minors (BWV1060 and 1062) dropping a tone from their original earlier contexts as the 'great double' (two violins) and the 'violin and oboe' concertos. Choosing how to build a canvas for these refashioned pieces can take you from the pioneering Leonhardt readings, which introduced one-to-a-part chamber scorings, to the thrusting modern chamber-orchestra versions from the likes of George Malcolm and Karl Richter.

Masaaki imagines these works very much as chamber creations but presented with a warm resonance which will suit almost all constituencies. The danger with the famous 'double' (BWV1062) is that the visceral dialoguing of the two violins can only be part-replicated on two harpsichords. Nevertheless, the association of these scores with Bach's specific redeployment for domestic concert purposes (and, like Suzuki, obvious music for Bach to perform with a son and/or student) creates a sense of touching intimacy; both Masaaki and Masato rejoice in the simple elegance and devotional belonging which these pieces afford.

Although the orchestral accompaniment is curiously demarcated from the solos in the C major Concerto, BWV1061 (like Mozart's K448, this is really a two-keyboard work, pure and simple), and therefore largely fulfils a harnessing role in the reworked version, the string parts elsewhere deserve rather more personality than the somewhat generic performances here, especially in BWV1060.

No such fears trouble the ear in the fresh and beautifully judged playing of the Suzukis throughout. Masato Suzuki's arrangement of the Orchestral Suite in C major for two harpsichords is matched by the liveliness of knowing exchanges, luminous textures and an organic 'galanterie'. **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

JS Bach • Beethoven • Mozart

JS Bach Orchestral Suite No 3, BWV1068^a

Beethoven Symphony No 1, Op 21^b

Mozart Symphony No 29, K201^b

Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Otto Klemperer

ICA Classics mono © ICAC5120 (74' • ADD)

Recorded ^b1954, ^a1955



The opening chord of Beethoven's finale is *echt* Klemperer, weighty, incisive,

austere, until, after a spell of mock deliberation, the main *Allegro* takes flight and we're offered a last-minute reprieve. A marvellous First, this, flexible and yielding with strong accents, plenty of illuminating detail and drama to spare. There's a 1958 Klemperer/Berlin Radio Symphony recording of the Second Symphony out on Audite (1/12), which is similarly commanding. Both have a granitic edge yet the body of sound is warm and meaty, even given the vintage sound.

The Mozart symphony is conceptually similar to Klemperer's stereo Philharmonia recording except that the pace is quicker and the mood more urgent (even joyful).

The music benefits from that all-important sense of live engagement; and although the Cologne orchestra is hardly a match for a vintage Philharmonia, a compensating spontaneity counts for a great deal.

The Bach Third Orchestral Suite will perhaps divide listeners rather more although, again, Klemperer's insistence on textural clarity and a choice of lively tempi offset the orchestra's rather weighty profile. Best are the Overture, where a sense of occasion is a laudable virtue, and the dance movements, all of them rustic and jaunty. The Air is rather earthbound, the celebrated top line held tight by the voices beneath it. But it isn't in the least indulgent. Sound-wise, ICA has done well to keep filtering to a minimum. In fact the only reason I was reminded that these are 'old' recordings was through the quality of the performances: love them or leave them, you'd travel far and wide to hear anything similar nowadays. **Rob Cowan**

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 1, Op 21; No 2, Op 36; No 3, 'Eroica', Op 55; No 4, Op 60. Overture 'Coriolan', Op 62. Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43 – Overture
Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra / Bruno Weil
Tafelmusik (M) (2) TMK1023CD2 (151' • DDD)
Recorded live at Koerner Hall, Toronto, 2012-13



The *Prometheus* Overture augurs well, a brightly lit performance,

unhurried and nicely shaped with unforced accents. *Coriolan* on the other hand charges forth with a keen though never exaggerated sense of drama.

The *pizzicato* strings and woodwinds that open the First Symphony also benefit from Bruno Weil's refusal to overstate the musical case, with pointed dialogue between winds and strings once the main *Allegro* gets going. Here accents are more forceful, especially towards the end of the first movement's exposition, but never forceful enough to compromise the work's Haydnesque character. After a bracing *scherzo* ('Menuetto'), the timpani player marks a stern opening for the finale's initial *Adagio*, before the *Allegro* flies off at a real lick. A very good First, then, vigorously played and thoughtfully balanced.

The more imposing Second Symphony isn't quite so successful. The opening is poised but prosaic, capturing little of the work's furrowed sense of purpose. Turn to Frans Brüggen's latest recording with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century and

the contrast is striking, bland pastel shades as opposed to big, sombre sonorities stylistically reminiscent of Furtwängler – though not specifically Furtwängler's dreadful-sounding radio relay of the same work. At 8'02" into the first movement's development section you hardly hear the horns, and the big, brass-topped build-up around the coda wants for impact. Skrowaczewski and Scherchen tell a quite different story, far more gripping. The tortured heights of the *Larghetto* are also underwhelming, and Weil levels the two chords that push the *Scherzo*'s Trio towards its close, ignoring the *sforzando* that's marked under the second of them (compare Skrowaczewski or Abbado in Berlin).

As to the Fourth, Weil balances the slow introduction well, keeping the bass-line clear. Gardiner is similarly transparent, though in Weil's hands the *Allegro vivace* that leaps from it is unexceptional. The fast-lane finale is well played though the bubbly clarinet that busies around the second subject is barely audible. Zinman in Zurich is far stronger on clarity here.

When the oboe leads the second subject of the *Eroica*'s 'Marcia funebre', Zinman generates far more tension, his approach, though swift, a credible mirror of a solemn, even defiant processional. His climaxes are tautly sprung, much as Gardiner's are, whereas Weil is relatively soft-grained. Much the same applies to the first movement, so different to Gardiner's post-Toscanini blitzkrieg and the broader, mellower manner of Brüggen. I could go on, but I'd be wasting words. Weil's Beethoven is for the most part considered, generally well played and up to speed with modern scholarship but it lacks individuality. Best by far are the two overtures and the First Symphony, and one hopes that a second volume will feature performances that are as good, if not better. **Rob Cowan**

Syms – selected comparison:

ORR, Gardiner (11/94^B) (ARCH) 477 8643AB5

Zurich Tonhalle Orch, Zinman

(7/99) (ARTN) 74321 65410-2

BPO, Abbado (11/08) (DG) 477 5864GM5

Orch of the 18th Century, Brüggen

(1/13) (GLOS) GCDSA921116

Vienna St Op Orch, RPO, Scherchen

(ANDR) ANDRCD9078

Saarbrücken RSO, Skrowaczewski (OEHM) OC526

Beethoven

'The Late Quartets'

String Quartets (arr Tønnesen) –

No 12, Op 127; No 13, Op 130; No 14, Op 131;

No 15, Op 132; No 16, Op 135

Camerata Nordica / Terje Tønnesen

BIS (M) (3) BIS1096 (3h 26' • DDD)

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Bach's keyboard concertos

Three recordings that came before Suzuki's – and how Gramophone rated them



JUNE 1967

Bach Harpsichord Concertos

Leonhardt Consort /

Gustav Leonhardt hpd

Telefunken Das Alte Werk

● SAWT9411, 9424, 9458

(three 12in • 42s each)

The historically minded may, I fancy, enjoy these records rather more than the average Bach-lover – not that the playing is anywhere other than very good indeed, but the coloration is monochrome (in matters of registration Gustav Leonhardt shows himself most austere), the dynamic contrast restricted, and the actual harpsichord tone – a 'Baroque' tone though from modern instruments – is unvaryingly forceful and, in multiple concertos, clattering. If, for you, abundant vitality and great clarity are outweighed by such considerations, I advise you to hear these discs first before deciding whether or not to buy them. Lionel Salter



OCTOBER 1981

Bach Harpsichord Concertos

Kenneth Gilbert hpd The English

Concert / Trevor Pinnock hpd

Archiv Produktion (F) ● 2723 077

(four records • nas)

Leonhardt preferred single strings, five of them, in every work, and they made possible a likeable chamber-music clarity which was then most unusual. A photograph in the new booklet shows Pinnock using as many as 14 strings; he may have used fewer in some works but details are not given. However, the clarity is good in the solo concertos and quite superb in the two discs which offer the best-recorded (and best-performed) versions of the concertos for more than one keyboard that have come my way. Roger Fiske



DECEMBER 1985

Bach Keyboard Concertos

Justus Frantz pf Hamburg PO /

Christoph Eschenbach pf

DG (F) 415 655-2GH

I got to know all these concertos in performances on pianos when I was at school, and I thought they were marvellous. I'm almost ashamed to admit that in these musicological times piano versions can still sound marvellous to me and this record gave me a lot of pleasure. The players, none of them I think harpsichordists, recorded the music because they wanted to, and you can't argue with that. Roger Fiske

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Mahler, Mitropoulos and Bernstein seeded the idea, and now the Norwegian violinist

and conductor Terje Tønnesen allows it to blossom with this complete, integrated set of late Beethoven quartets arranged for string orchestra. Unlike Bernstein's paradigmatic recording of Op 131, where double basses bolster the cello line, Tønnesen makes it clear that his versions are conscious 'arrangements', where decisions have been made to rethink the pieces as quasi-concerti grossi: 'I've tried to strengthen the contrast between the powerful parts and those filled with intimacy by having the latter played by soli,' he tells us.

Others have complained that a string orchestra can't be expected to clone the intimate communion of four players grappling with chamber music that has orchestral aspirations: by making the music explicitly orchestral, the logic goes, Beethoven's challenges have somehow been ironed out – there's safety in orchestral numbers. But I wonder how fair that is. When you watch a film based on a novel, the scale and medium have changed, and basing any critique around the dimensions of the original book is nonsense. Op 130 comes complete with the *Grosse Fuge* finale, and hearing the Camerata Nordica traversing Beethoven's spaghetti junction of entwined lines with a combination of supreme confidence and adrenalin-fuelled terror suggests two things: Beethoven's messages have been understood but this is still music of the forever future.

And that's generally the rule of thumb: the grander Beethoven's ambition, the better Tønnesen's arrangement. The relatively unambitious Op 127 sounds well-to-do and sumptuous in this context, the call and response of solo strings against the ensemble working well in the first movement, but we don't actually learn much we didn't already know. But Opp 130, 131 and 132 fast-track us to the heart of the matter: the smack of the *Presto* and the stillness of the *Adagio* in Op 131 writ large and the delicate slow, chorale-based movement taken to the heavens in Op 132. **Philip Clark**

Bruch • Prokofiev

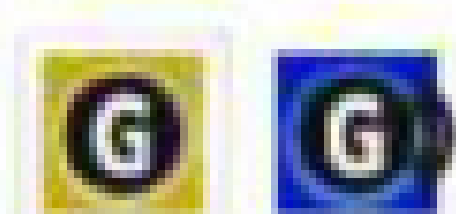
Bruch Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26

Prokofiev Violin Concerto No 2, Op 63

Guro Kleven Hagen *vn*

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / Bjarte Engeset

Simax © PSC1266 (49' • DDD)



Guro Kleven Hagen, at 20 years old, already plays with great assurance and true

artistry. Her account of the Prokofiev stresses its romantic side, the first movement giving the impression of organic unity, fostered by well-managed transitions and well-engineered orchestral balance. This is very different from Patricia Kopatchinskaja's recent recording, where we're made vividly aware of all the music's unusual, even eccentric juxtaposition of ideas. In the following *Andante* Hagen produces a warm, sweet tone from the start; Kopatchinskaja's fragility, enhanced by the spare accompanying arpeggios, only gradually gives way to a more overtly expressive manner. It's not that Hagen's performance is lacking in variety but the contrasts occur within a narrower tonal spectrum. In the finale, she plays with irresistible vigour and momentum. A convincing, persuasive performance.

It seems to me that performances of the Bruch have become slower as violinists strive to extract every ounce of expression from the unforgettable melodies. Hagen, however, achieves similar timings to those of Fritz Kreisler in 1924-25, and without any expressive deficit. For the first movement's second subject, the tempo only slackens significantly at the point where Bruch writes *un poco più lento*, creating a touching effect of reluctance to relinquish a beautiful moment. And in the *Adagio* the melodies flow easily, clearly distinguished from the more decorative passages. Hagen's finale breathes youthful vitality, the chords of the main theme accomplished smoothly and effortlessly. She's an outstanding musician and I eagerly await her next recording. **Duncan Druce**

Prokofiev – selected comparison:

Kopatchinskaja, LPO, Jurovski (1/14) (NAIV) V5352

Bruch – selected comparison:

Kreisler, Royal Albert Hall Orch, Goosens

(8/09) (EMI) 265042-2; (NAXO) 8 110925

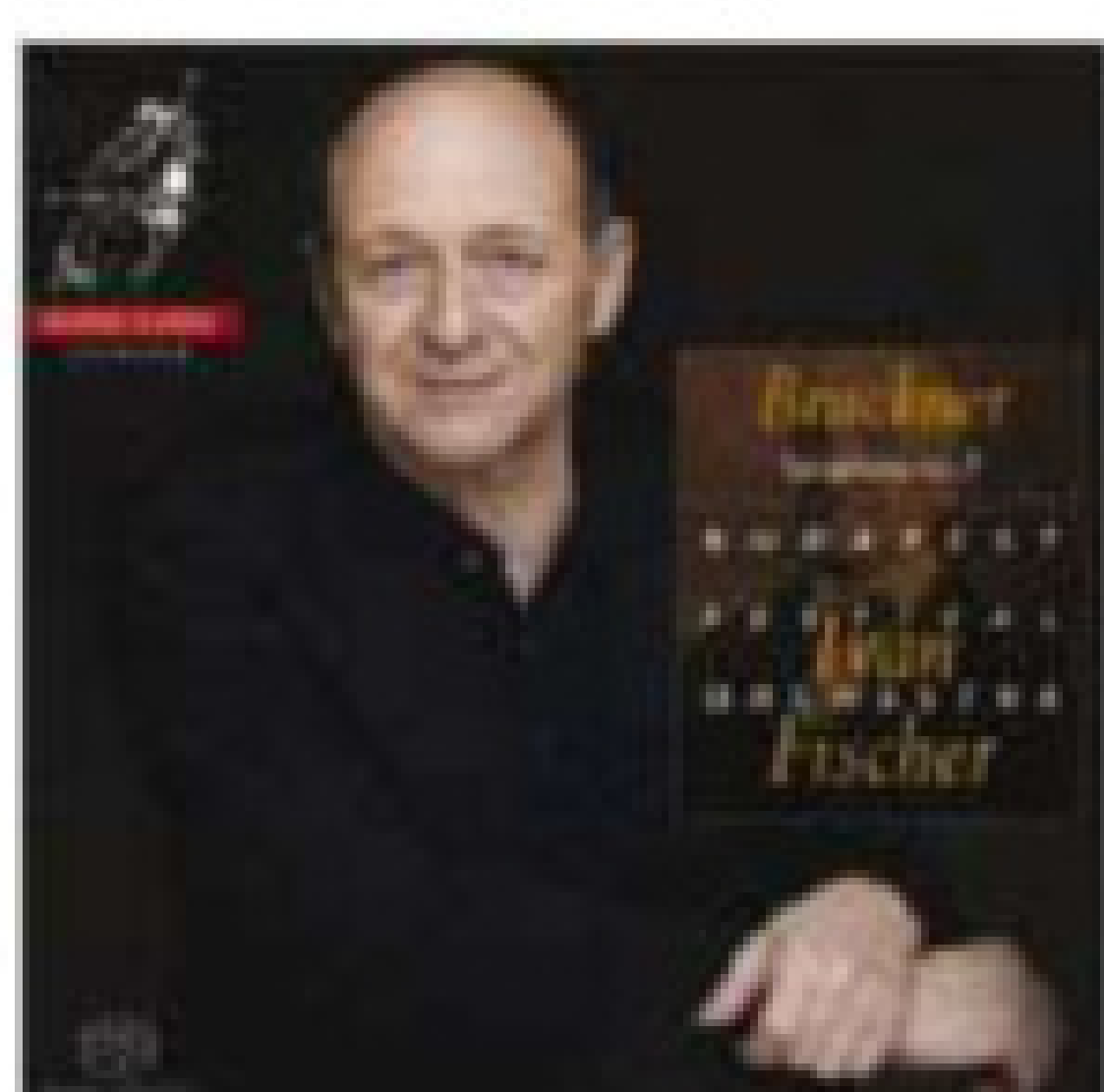
Bruckner

Symphony No 7

Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Channel Classics © CCSSA33714

(57' • DDD/DSD)



Right from the opening *pp tremolando* you can tell that as an interpretation this is

going to be something off the beaten track. Rather than cue the familiar shimmering haze, Fischer prefers a softly undulating chord so that when the cellos enter with the opening melody, the ground is already warm. That warmth remains a constant throughout the performance, though a pervading tenderness, fluidity and occasional delicacy (the violins at 1'52") lend the music an unusually sensual profile. It takes some getting used to but it's worth making the effort to adjust. The prominence of the marching bass crotchets at 4'10" alerts us to the upcoming climax while the faster passage (*rubig*, 'peaceful') that follows takes on an appropriately pastoral quality, though the galloping lead horns at 5'51" might have sounded rather less shy. Also the full-orchestral transformation of the opening theme (after the flute clears the way for it, at 10'13") lacks weight. The movement's coda at 16'13" forms a well-shaped curve, slowing before the final climax sets in, which speeds alarmingly. Turn to the less interventionist Nikolaus Harnoncourt (with the Vienna Philharmonic) and you hear the benefits of a more robust approach.

The opening of the *Adagio* is simplicity itself (Harnoncourt's approach is not dissimilar), especially the gentle string passage at 0'54", which verges on sounding Mozartian. Here as elsewhere Brucknerians schooled in the manners of Karajan, Furtwängler or Klemperer might find Fischer's approach to the *moderato* second subject a little too hasty. Also, where Harnoncourt passes on tamps and cymbals for the movement's principal climax, Fischer engages with them. The *Scherzo* enjoys a winning lilt, with effectively judged climaxes (Fischer as ever a stylish dancer in interpretative terms) and an affectionate ebb and flow to the Trio, whereas the finale is welcomed with keen accents and a placidly played (if swiftly paced) second subject. Interesting the way Fischer marks hairpin dynamics just before the strutting *marcato* passage at 2'38", and this time the movement's closing bars are held steady.

As to digital comparisons, in the first instance I'd try Harnoncourt, who shares with Fischer a certain penchant for luminous textures; but when it comes to a less restlessly inflected approach (which I personally prefer), Marek Janowski and Stanisław Skrowaczewski will take some beating. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparisons:

VPO, Harnoncourt (1/00⁸) (TELD)

2564 69004-9 or 2564 65626-3

Suisse Romande Orch, Janowski

(9/11) (PENT) PTC5186 370

LPO, Skrowaczewski (10/13) (LPO) LPO0071



'More focused and expressively articulated' than their competitors: the Basle Symphony Orchestra and Dennis Russell Davies perform Glass's 'Low' Symphony

Bruckner

Symphony No 8 (ed Haas)

Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann

Video director Henning Kasten

C Major Entertainment © DVD 716108;

© Blu-ray 716204 (89' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.0/5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Semperoper, Dresden,
June 10, 2012



A film of a symphony in live performance filmed just three years after an audio recording of the same piece in the same place with the same performers: and people wonder what's wrong with the record industry. So this release would be slightly ridiculous if substantially different, and potentially redundant if not. In the event the timings are so similar – out by half a minute in the *Adagio*, much less elsewhere – that one is left investigating whether the intervening three years of music-making between the orchestra and its music director brought about greater intimacy and understanding, and here the answer is positive. Paradoxically there are more slips, especially of ensemble, in this later version

– Thielemann, like Karajan, has seldom been one to obsess over such details – but the sense of instrumental soloists and choirs listening and responding to one another is palpable, making the *Adagio* a genuinely live experience albeit still one suffused with the satisfaction of its own beautiful existence (especially noticeable on Blu-ray), and this is my more general problem with Thielemann's way with the piece, which has overall tightened up since his Munich days but runs along the same broad (sometimes very broad) lines of Gothic splendour.

Remember the days when the Eighth was announced with the spurious tag of 'The Apocalyptic'? It is not cast in C minor for nothing, and a recent, brisk and uncomplicated LPO performance led by Jukka-Pekka Saraste reminded me that it's Bruckner's most troubled completed work, in which the coda to the finale is so hard-won, against all the obstacles towards its resolution that the composer places so determinedly in its path, as sometimes to flaunt hope or defiance rather than fulfilment. You would do well to hear any of this in Thielemann's performance, and I rather doubt he'd want you to. He no longer comes to a standstill at the turning point of the *Adagio* and there are sudden

surges through the course of the finale, moments exciting in themselves that may in time prove to be part of the evolution of an interpretation but for now feel like tinkering at the edges. **Peter Quantrill**

Selected comparison:

Staatskapelle Dresden, Thielemann, r2009

(A/10) (PROF) PH10031

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'Orchestral Masterworks from Switzerland'

Brunner Partita^a **Schoeck** Festlicher Hymnus,

Op 64. Overture 'William Ratcliff', Op 29

Widmer Concerto for Piano, Percussion

and Orchestra, Op 160^b

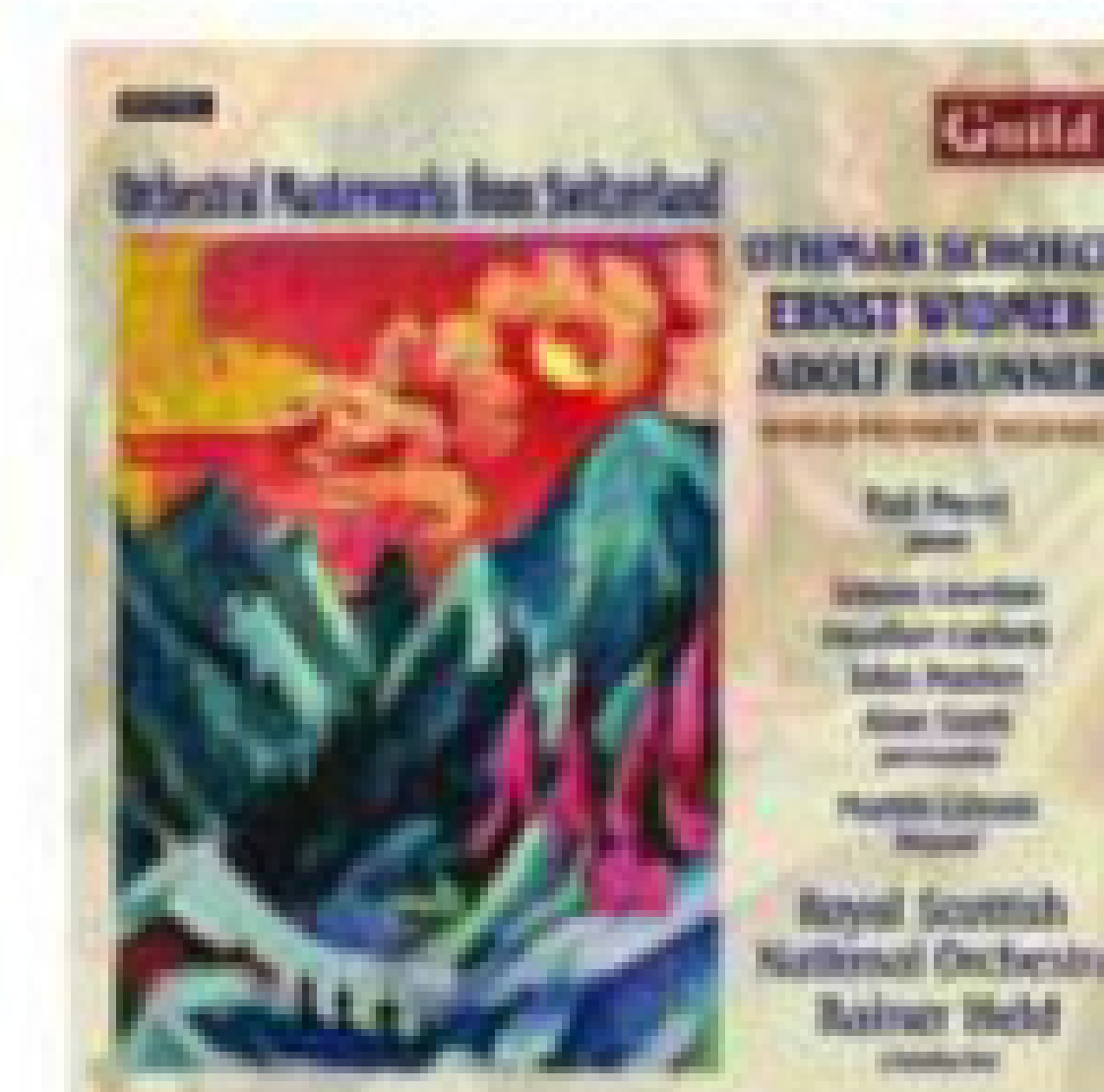
^{ab}Fali Pavri ^{pf}Heather Corbett, ^bSimon Lowdon,

^bJohn Poulter, ^bAlan Stark ^{perc}Martin Gibson

timp Royal Scottish National Orchestra /

Rainer Held

Guild © GMCD7403 (78' • DDD)



The title's stretching it a bit with the inclusion of Ernst Widmer, who became a naturalised

Brazilian at the age of 33 and spent the remaining 30 years of his life in Salvador de Bahia. He completed this Piano Concerto two years before his death in 1990, and its

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— Lynn René Bayley,
Fanfare

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— Steve Marsh,
Classical Guitar Magazine (UK)

"Delight of the week" –Sept 27th 2013.

— Kara Dahl Russell,
Just Opened on WSCL Radio 89.5 Delmarva Public Radio

polyrhythms and rainsticks invite a *Deliciae Brasiliensis* subtitle rather than Honegger's more sober alternative in his Fourth Symphony. 'A parade of tropical street musicians whose infectious rhythms have emerged through a modernist vortex', according to the stylish and persuasive notes by Chris Walton, and there's plenty of Widmer hitherto unrecorded, but one hears why: the Bartókian snap of the piano part doesn't conceal its limited gestural spans and earnest fusion of idioms; head to head, the drum cadenzas in the finale wouldn't last the first round with Revueltas and *La noche de los Mayas*. Maybe you can take the composer out of Switzerland, but not...

The Partita by Adolf Brunner is another first recording, and a second, harder-edged, more rhythmically extrovert and less distantly recorded, might make a stronger case for a two-movement exercise of expanded neo-classicism. Or it might not.

Bookending this curio are early and late works by Othmar Schoeck, but in reverse order. The *Festlicher Hymnus* lives up to its Straussian name and can enthusiastically be recommended to all lovers of bombast. The concert overture *William Ratcliff* may not come near to portraying the psychological, not to say psychopathic torment of its eponymous hero after Heine's play but I like Schoeck's transformation of a lick from *The Barber of Seville* into a portentous theme and his cogent, *Manfred*-like movement between Ratcliff's theme and more hopeful material presumably characterising Maria, the girl who twice rejects him and is eventually stabbed to death for her pains. In Schoeck's hands it's full-blooded fun and done in the grand manner by the RSNO and the Swiss conductor for the sessions. **Peter Quanttrill**

Gipps • Leighton

Gipps Piano Concerto, Op 34^a. Opalescence,

Op 72. Theme and Variations, Op 57a

Leighton Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11^a

Angela Brownridge *pf*

^aMalta Philharmonic Orchestra / Michael Laus

Cameo © CC9046CD (57' • DDD)



More gaps in the catalogue valiantly plugged by Cameo Classics. Angela

Brownridge has already proved an assiduous champion of her teacher Kenneth Leighton (1929-88) with a magnificent three-disc survey of his solo piano output for Delphian. She brings to the first of Leighton's three concertos for the

instrument (composed in 1951) both heart-warming conviction and swaggering verve. An accomplished, strongly communicative discovery it comprises, too, whose youthfully ebullient outer movements are counterbalanced by the bittersweet tread of its cloud-hung centrepiece. The hard-working Malta PO under Michael Laus are at times pushed beyond their means but the performance as a whole is convincing enough. Perhaps Chandos will also treat us to a recording in due course.

The remainder of the disc is devoted to Ruth Gipps (1921-99), who enjoyed early success as both a pianist and composer (she later took up the baton, as well as founding the London Repertoire Orchestra in 1955). Her Piano Concerto dates from 1948 and leaves an engaging impression – dashingly romantic, consistently songful and agreeably good-humoured, with a captivatingly fragrant slow movement to commend it. Suffice to say, Brownridge is again on sterling form, but it's only fair to warn that the orchestra is not exactly in the luxury class. Both the solo items are also worth getting to know, particularly the serene and enviably concentrated Theme and Variations. Admirable sound here, too, conspicuously more refined and palatable than in the orchestral offerings. Any misgivings aside, this remains a courageous and valuable issue. **Andrew Achenbach**

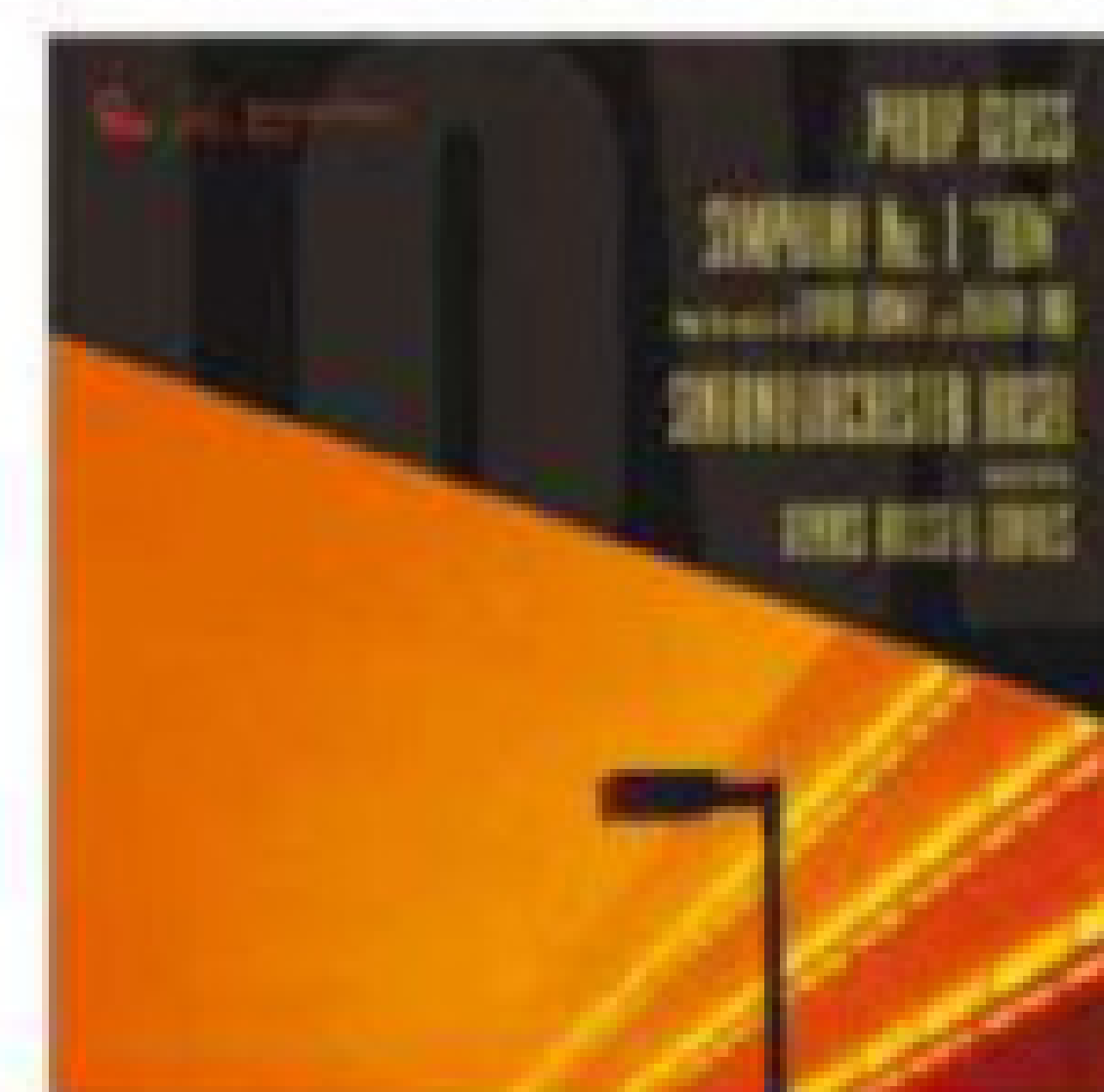
Glass

Symphony No 1, 'Low'

Basle Symphony Orchestra /

Dennis Russell Davies

Orange Mountain Music © OMM0095 (47' • DDD)



Glass hit double figures in 2012 with the premiere of his Symphony No 10, yet there are still many who view the composer's efforts in this medium with a fair degree of scepticism and suspicion. There have been a number of damp squibs along the way, but Glass's first foray into symphonic territory surely ranks as one of his more successful attempts. Originally entitled *Low Symphony*, after David Bowie's 1977 album, Glass's unusual decision to quote and develop melodic lines and harmonic patterns from rock music imparts a sense of freshness, energy and drive to the work.

Of equal importance, perhaps, is the way Glass plays around with standard formal principles. The first movement is in a kind of abridged sonata form, with a slow opening characterised by rising and falling

lines in the violins, which eventually give way to a rhythmically charged second part. Glass then combines material from both 'subjects' in a kind of development section, cut short by a dramatic coda. A darkly mischievous second movement follows – *scherzo*-like in tone – and the symphony concludes with a lengthy, melody-heavy, at times almost Mahlerian movement. A bit lopsided, but it actually works.

The *Low* Symphony certainly reveals hidden levels the more one listens to it, and the Sinfonieorchester Basel do much to reinforce this view. Dennis Russell Davies is again at the helm, as he was back in 1993 when the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra produced the symphony's premiere recording (originally on Point Music). The Brooklyn recording will remain the 'urtext', of course, but the Basle players have produced a more focused and expressively articulated performance – the rhythmic edges are sharper and the melodic contours smoother. Recommended.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Comparative version:

Brooklyn PO, DR Davies (5/93^R) (PHIL) 475 075-2PM2

Glazunov • Kalinnikov • Khachaturian

Glazunov Symphony No 5, Op 55

Kalinnikov Symphony No 1

Khachaturian Masquerade - Suite

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Kazuki Yamada

Exton © ② ③ OVCL00487 (69' • DDD/DSD)



Now holding posts in Tokyo, Geneva and Monte Carlo, 30-year-old Kazuki Yamada

has perhaps been too busy to return to London after a fine debut with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 2011. This latest addition to his growing Exton discography confirms his natural way with the long lines of Silver Age symphonies after the Rachmaninov Second in that concert, and with a great European orchestra that seems to love Exton's microphones (I'm guessing the Japanese market loves the Czech Philharmonic back). The balance of harp, oscillating fiddles and cello melody at the start of the slow movement of the Kalinnikov is magically transparent but never surgical, thanks to the players' feeling for *rubato*, gently harnessed by Yamada. It's all a far cry from the equally impassioned but more abruptly sectional approach of Hermann Scherchen with the same orchestra back in 1951, and makes me understand, better than the rough-and-ready competition,

how and why Tchaikovsky prized Kalinnikov's gifts so highly, if necessarily briefly, before the younger man died in penury at the age of 35.

The tunes are more solid, the form more diffuse and the temperature cooler in the Glazunov, and Yamada coaxes a captivating warmth and charm from the second theme of the first movement, again at some distance from the hard-pressed intensity of older Russian recordings, but it's like placing Vishnevskaya's Tatyana beside Popp's. We can have both, and this isn't the *Pathétique*. Yamada keeps the *Scherzo* spinning in a properly Tchaikovskian whirl, a command of rhythmic exactness at sometimes challenging tempi that also distinguishes the Khachaturian suite. All this said, if Yamada's name has caught your eye, search out the precociously mature, preternaturally transparent Schubert Ninth he recorded with one of his 'home' bands, the Yokohama Sinfonietta. **Peter Quantrill**

Kalinnikov – selected comparison:

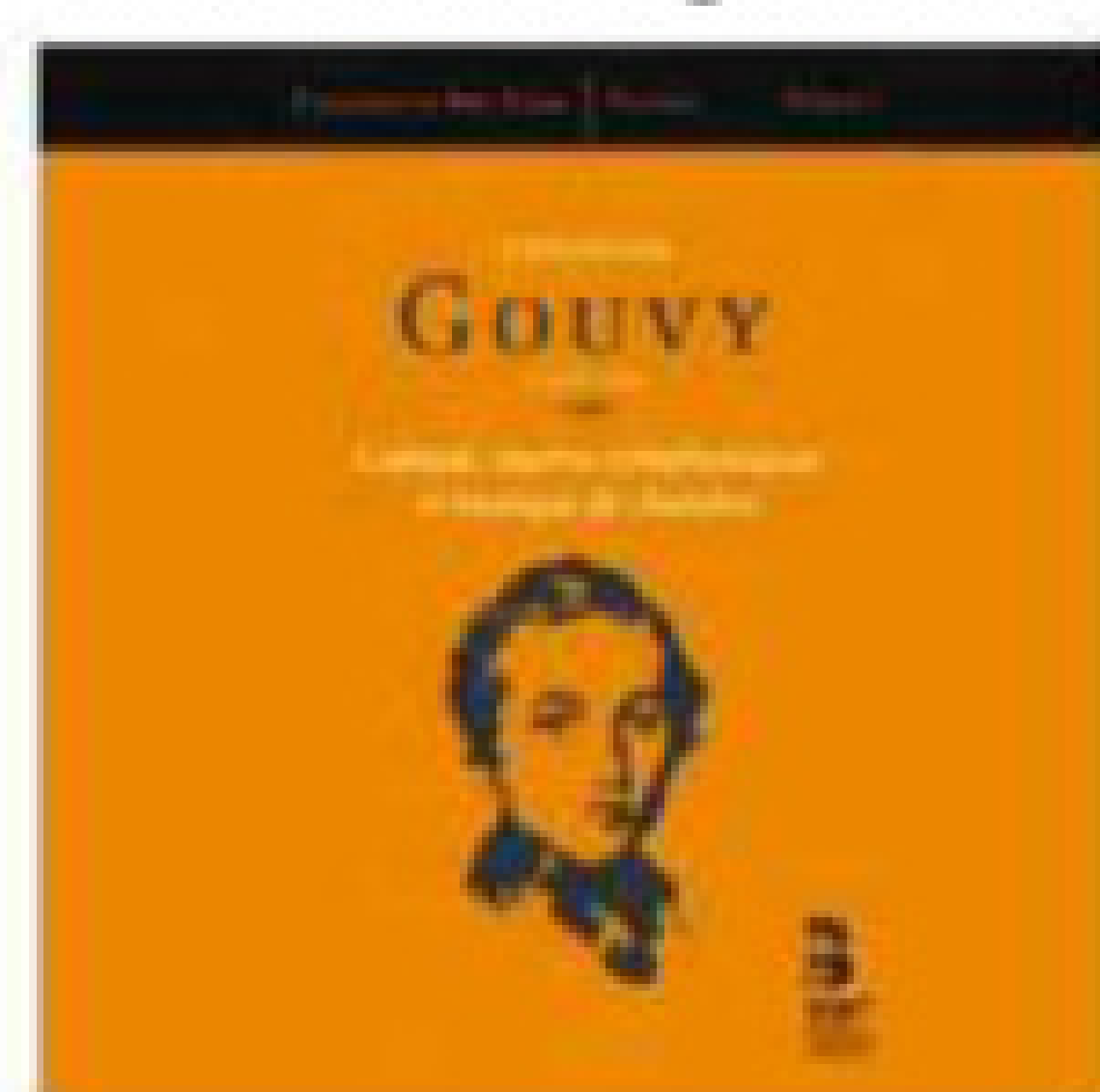
Czech PO, Scherchen (TAHR) TAH185/9

Gouvy

'Cantate, Oeuvres symphoniques et Musique de chambre'

Fantaisie pastorale. Overtures – Le giaour; Jeanne d'Arc; Le festival. Piano Trio No 4, Op 22. La Religieuse. Serenades – No 1, Op 82; No 2, Op 84. Sinfonietta, Op 80. String Quartets – Op 56 No 2; No 5, Op 68

Clémentine Margaine *mez* Tedi Papavrami *vn* Emmanuelle Swiercz *pf* Trio Arcadis; Cambini-Paris Quartet; Parisii Quartet; Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; Lorraine National Orchestra / Christian Arming, Jacques Mercier Ediciones Singulares (M) (3) ES1014 (3h 13' • DDD)



'Nobody cares what I have done; in Paris people think only of themselves and of the

present...More and more I feel that I do not belong here.' Théodore Gouvy (1819-98) yearned to be recognised in France. It was, spiritually speaking, his native country, but the region in which he was born had become part of Prussia after the defeats of Napoleon. He spent much of his time, and also absorbed most of his musical influences, in Germany, but even there he did not feel entirely at home. Gouvy, if disillusioned in his own time, would be delighted to be alive today to witness the resurgence of interest in his works, which number in excess of 160. Only last year CPO released some Gouvy symphonies; Toccata Classics brought out a CD of his chamber serenades; and the

ensemble Voces Intimae revived the piano trios (all 8/13).

In reviewing those recordings I wrote that 'as more and more Gouvy becomes known, we are unlikely to uncover a major innovator in Franco-German culture, but there is a lot to be said for music that simply appeals on its own terms through a sure compositional technique and vital creative spark'. That assertion calls for some tweaking in the light of this new release of three CDs contained within a handsome, informative book (in French and English) produced by the Palazzetto Bru Zane in Venice, which actively promotes the cause of neglected French Romantic music. Gouvy, even on the evidence of the wide range of works in various genres chosen for these three discs, was not a major innovator: I stand by that, since his indebtedness to Mendelssohn and Schumann is a consistent feature. He does possess a 'sure compositional technique and vital creative spark'; but listening to his substantial concert overtures *Le giaour* (after Byron), *Jeanne d'Arc* and *Le festival* you are also struck by a significant dramatic stimulus. This might seem to go against Gouvy's avowed aim to write 'la musique sérieuse' as opposed to programmatic music; but, as one of the essays in the book suggests, these works, classically proportioned, 'exalt moral values, rather than attempting to use music as a means of relating historical or legendary deeds'. The dynamically discerning performances by the Orchestre National de Lorraine certainly give them a healthy impetus.

Two string quartets, while still indicative of Gouvy's leanings towards the 19th-century German masters, are nevertheless sufficiently well defined in ideas and wrought with such discipline and spirit as to generate thoroughly involving performances by the Cambini and Parisii quartets. And the *Fantaisie pastorale* for violin and orchestra is a pure if manifestly Mendelssohnian delight. But perhaps the chief surprise is the rapt intensity of feeling, passionately projected here by the mezzo-soprano Clémentine Margaine, that Gouvy brings to *La religieuse*, a *scène dramatique* firmly in the French cantata tradition but shot through with an operatic fervour that lends it a powerful presence and gives a hint of where Gouvy's true flashes of individuality might lie.

Geoffrey Norris

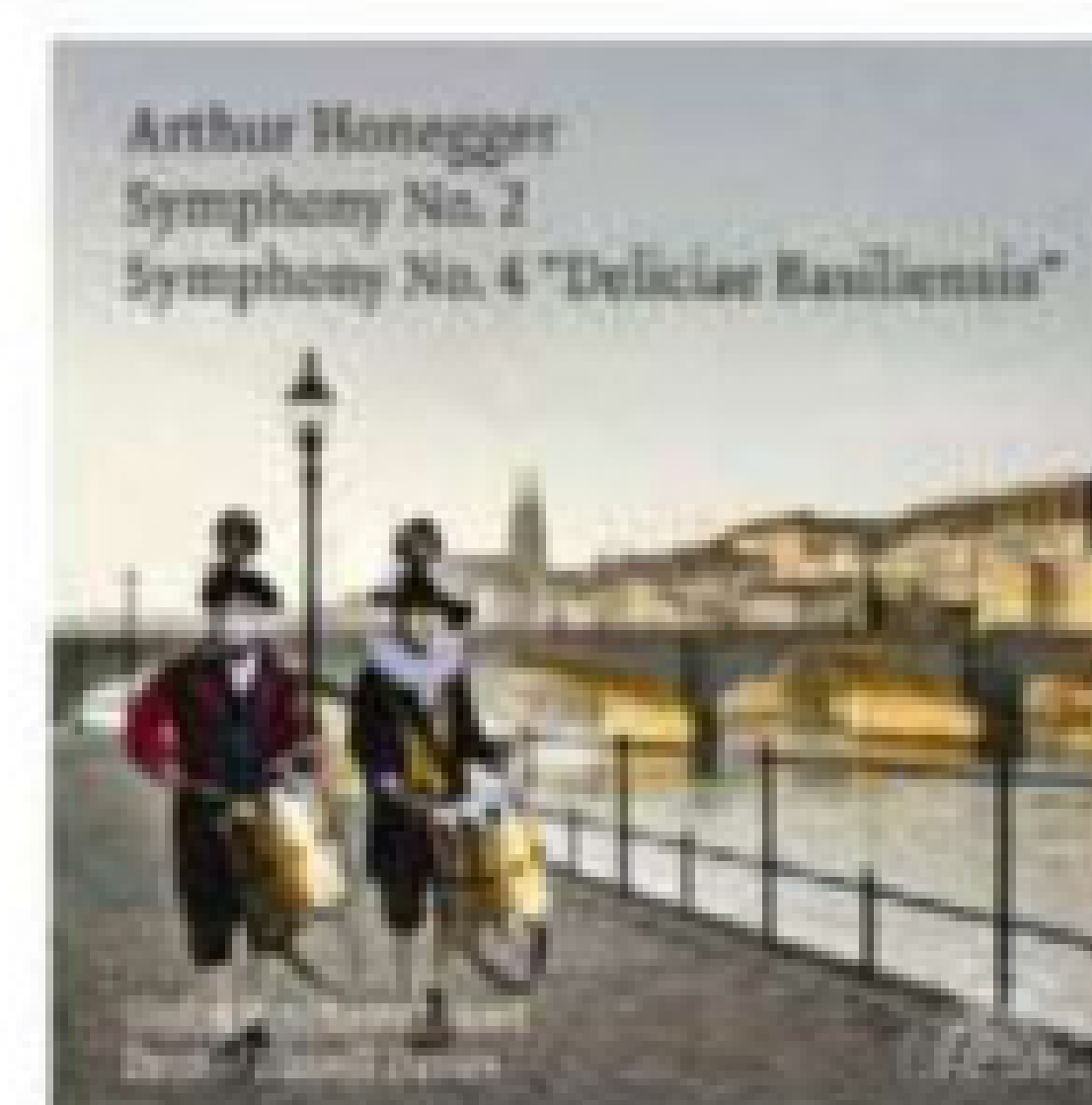
Honegger

Symphonies – No 2; No 4, 'Deliciae basiliensis'

Basle Symphony Orchestra /

Dennis Russell Davies

Solo Musica (F) SOB05 (57' • DDD)



These two fine Honegger symphonies make for an invigorating coupling, the gritty and muscular Second for strings and trumpet from 1940-41 (composed in Nazi-occupied Paris) forming a bold contrast with the altogether more sanguine, luminously scored Fourth from 1946. The latter bears the subtitle *Deliciae basiliensis* in heartfelt tribute to the city that provided its Swiss creator with wartime sanctuary.

Honegger's great friend and tireless champion Charles Munch was the dedicatee of the Second Symphony, and the second of his five recordings, with the Boston SO from March 1953, evinces a hair-raising intensity not equalled by Munch's 1968 swansong with the Orchestre de Paris (EMI, 12/69). Karajan's famous DG recording remains one of the highlights of his vast discography and I also have a lot of time for Ansermet, Baudo, Jansons and Zinman with the OSR, Czech PO, Oslo PO and Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich on Australian Eloquence, Supraphon, EMI and Decca respectively. Dennis Russell Davies presides over the most intrepidly spacious account I have ever encountered; but, for all the undeniable polish and co-ordination on show, there's a pervasive mood of chilly detachment that repeated hearings have yet to dispel.

It's a similar tale in the Fourth, where comparison with another live offering, namely Vladimir Jurowski's exquisitely lithe and affectionately shaped LPO version from March 2007 (2/12), is not to this newcomer's advantage; indeed, by its side Davies's defiantly unhurried conception leaves a curiously stern impression – I find myself craving greater thrust, radiant charm and poignancy. Nor would I prefer it to a healthy clutch of rivals – Baudo, Munch, Ansermet and Dutoit all spring to mind – though there's no denying that the Basle SO respond with laudable discipline for their Chief Conductor. Perhaps the somewhat clinical sound is also to blame, who knows, but overall this is not really a disc to which I can imagine myself returning terribly often. **Andrew Achenbach**

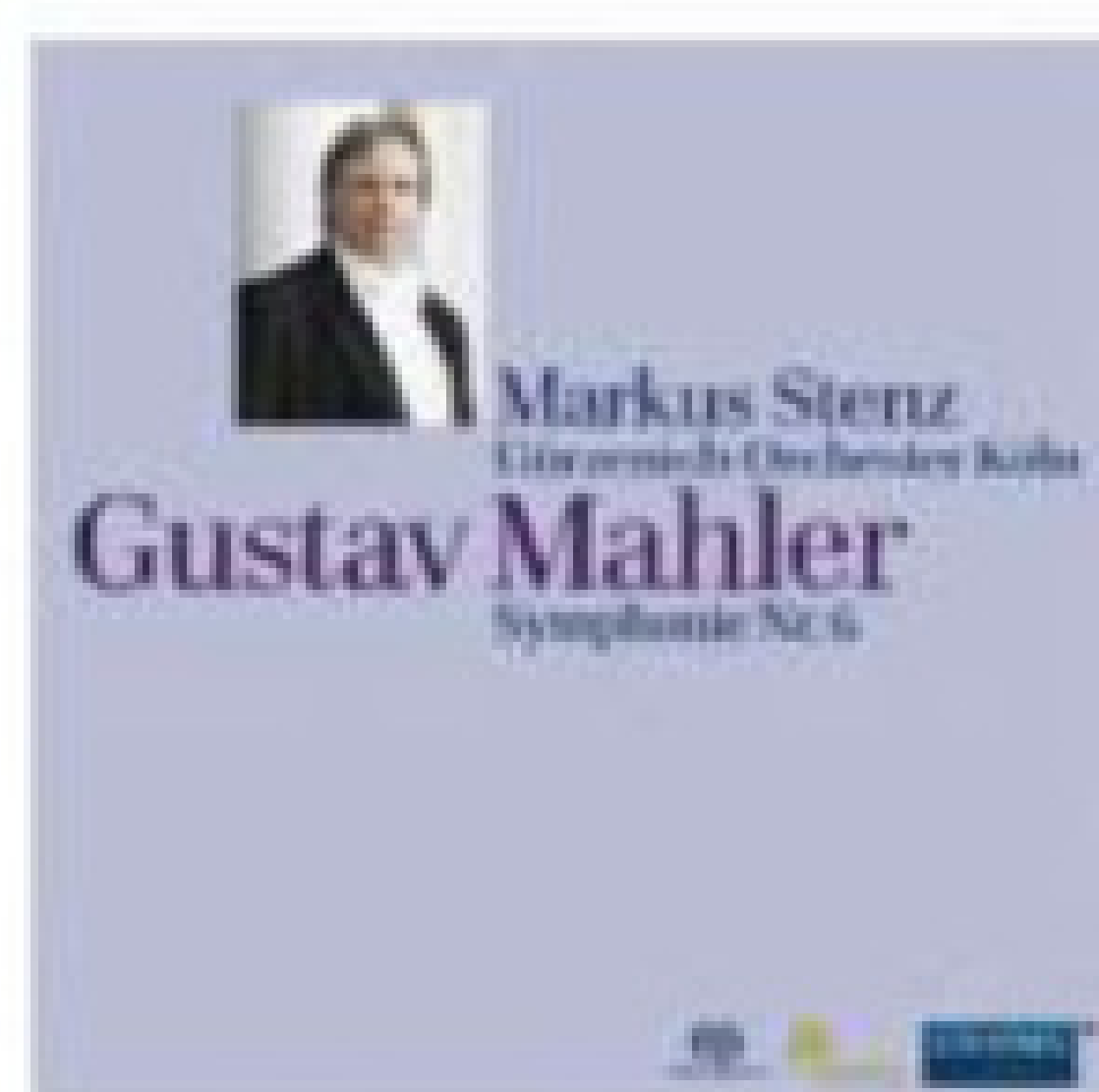
Mahler

Symphony No 6

Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / Markus Stenz

Oehms (F) (2) (3) OC651 (81' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Cologne, November 2013



We have an inbuilt expectation these days for precisioned, sonically impressive

Mahler – and this Sixth is no exception. But a forensic exposition of the score is only a means to an end with this composer and great performances of his work tend to happen between the notes, where the reasons for them reside. For a personality as strong as Marcus Stenz (as evidenced by his other Mahler) this struck me as a strangely anonymous account of the piece. It's true that Stenz is more objective in Mahler than some, more seduced by the letter of these scores than by their psychological projections – but the consequence of this approach is an emotional coolness that has no place in the pages of Mahler's most soul-baring symphony.

The first-movement exposition is immaculate – good tempo, clean lines, flexibility and uplift with Alma's theme (second subject), where Mahler's singing clarinets come through nicely. But isn't the effect rather streamlined, lacking trenchancy and a dogged insistence? And

compare Bernstein in Alma's theme – not just uplift there but euphoria. The central departure to remote regions is transparent and poetic – some gorgeously distilled playing – but there is a deeper sadness and melancholy to these pages that Stenz fails to unlock. Listen then to Bernstein or Tennstedt (his 1983 live Prom performance) in the moment where grisly string basses reintroduce the march – atmosphere, subtext, a blackness. And where Stenz lays bare the big dissonant appoggiatura in the coda, Tennstedt shreds our senses with it.

Stenz – in keeping with so many now (but significantly *not* Bernstein or Tennstedt) – goes for the soft option of the *Andante* movement second and again its beauties are coolly attended with, for example, a tell-tale upward *glissando* in violins rendered pure and perfect like an abstract brushstroke as opposed to an involuntary 'catch' in the voice.

The wonky trios of the *Scherzo* – arriving too late to serve as a shocking mirror-image of the first movement – are too well-groomed (a criticism we can level at too much Mahler these days). Tennstedt may exaggerate the awkwardness with his cheesy *rubatos* but it's awkwardness with a grotesque purpose.

The nightmarish finale frankly lacks a sense of the apocalyptic in Stenz's safe hands and though the notorious 'hammer' is spot-on sonically (a real crack of doom), the defiant climaxes which carry us to and from those fatalistic blows convey little of Mahler's withering desperation. No one, but no one, does that like Klaus Tennstedt. There is, however, a nerve-racking moment of suspense before the final *fortissimo* which Stenz times to perfection, stretching it a little more than is comfortable. Would that there had been more of that kind of theatre.

Edward Seckerson

Selected comparisons:

VPO, Bernstein (1/90) (DG) 427 697-2GH2,

477 5181GB5 or 459 080-2GX16

LPO, Tennstedt, r1983 (8/09) (LPO) LPO0038

Massenet

Le Cid - Suite de ballet. Don César de Bazan - Entr'acte sevillana. Les érinnyes - Scène religieuse^a. Fantaisie^a. Overture, 'Phèdre'. Le roi de Lahore - Overture. Scènes pittoresques. La Vierge - Le dernier sommeil de la Vierge^a

^aTruls Mørk VC

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos © CHSA5137 (82' • DDD/DSD)

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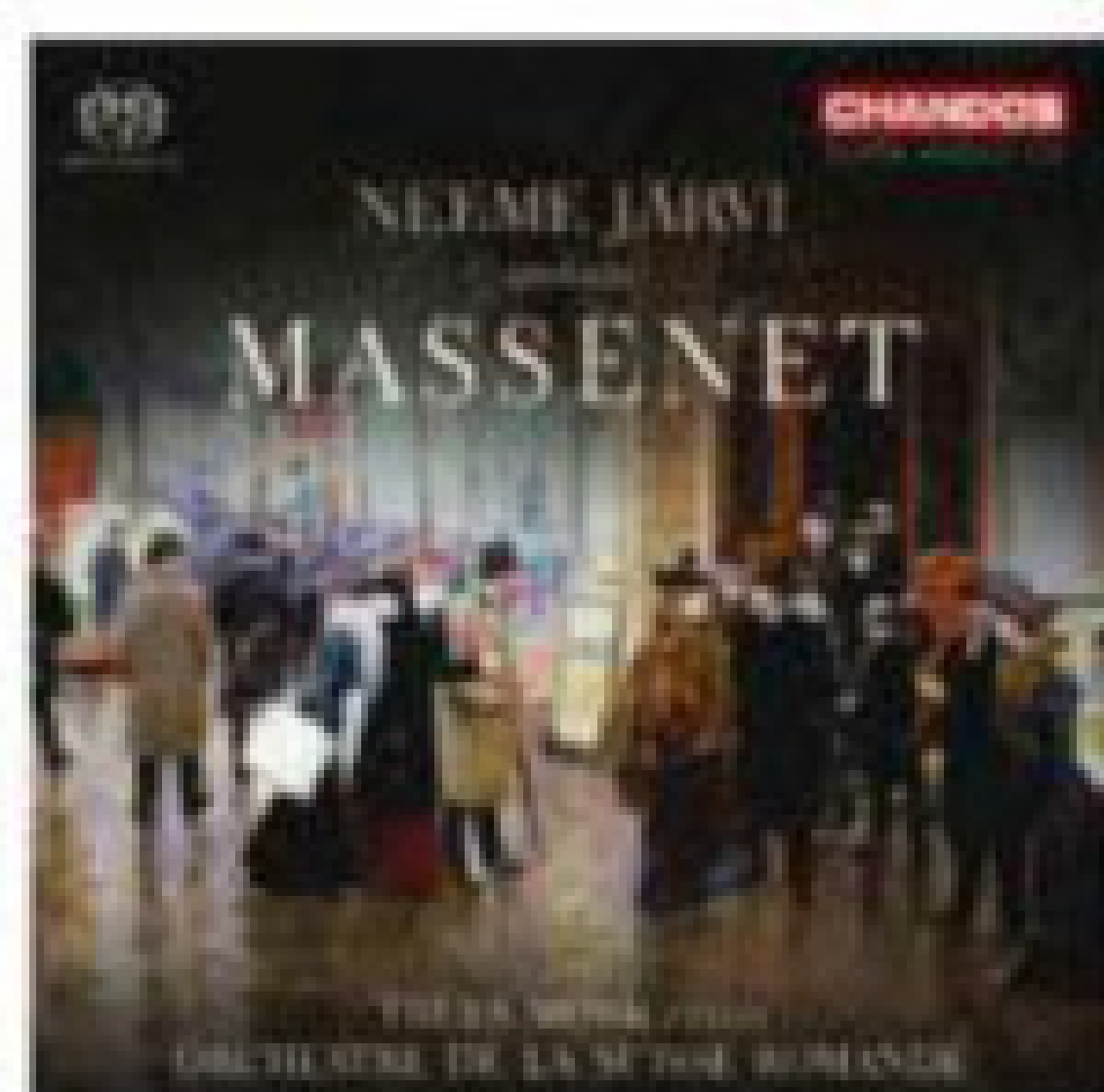
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Admirers of Neeme Järvi's recordings of the Tchaikovsky ballets with the Bergen

Philharmonic will know that he is just the man for this collection of Massenet's music drawn from the theatre and concert hall. From the moment the curtain rises on the ballet suite from *Le Cid* you can sense the roar of the greasepaint and the smell of the crowd as the Suisse Romande Orchestra snap into the opening chords. Their delicate wind phrases and the click of the castanets identify the Castillane, the first of the seven national dances from Massenet's epic opera. We learn from Roger Nichols's entertaining notes that Massenet, always attentive to his leading ladies, incorporated 'quelques rythmes très intéressants' suggested to him by the ballerina Rosita Mauri, who danced the lead role. She too would no doubt have relished the pointed playing, the shading of a phrase from *crescendo* to *diminuendo*, the sinuous line of those languorous Spanish tunes and above all the underlying spring in the step of each dance. This is a winning interpretation; and likewise the conductor's view on the *Scènes pittoresques*, a charming suite. The Spanish flavour returns in the brilliant entr'acte from *Don César* and the ceremonial in *Le roi de Lahore*, where the lyrical passages invoke Tchaikovsky, who much admired this opera. Debussy doffed his hat to *Phèdre*, a concert overture, where the stark opening with its plunging bass-lines recalls another tragic figure, Berlioz's *Lear*.

The cellist Truls Mørk is heard on an additional track, the Meditation from *Thaïs*, available as a download (the 81'30" running time preventing its inclusion), and more significantly in the *Fantaisie* for cello and orchestra, where his lovely playing, full of felicitous touches in perfect partnership with the orchestra, offers unadulterated pleasure. This collaboration is equally charismatic in an eloquent performance of 'Le dernier sommeil de la Vierge', where the combination of unmuted cello and muted violin, one octave up, testifies to Massenet's unfailing ear for orchestral effect. A CD to warm the heart and lift the spirits. **Adrian Edwards**

Mendelssohn

A Midsummer Night's Dream - incidental music, Op 21/61. Overture, 'Ruy Blas', Op 95. Piano Concertos^a - No 1, Op 25; No 2, Op 40

^aSaleem Ashkar pf

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly
Decca © 481 0778DH (75' • DDD)



Riccardo Chailly, the Gewandhaus Orchestra and his soloist, Israeli pianist

Saleem Ashkar, give us an ideal, new-minted view of Mendelssohn. Chailly's rapid but never driven tempi bring fresh and dazzling light to the ever-familiar *Ruy Blas* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, relishing the opportunity for pinpoint, quicksilver brilliance complemented by warmth in the Nocturne and, most of all, in the final pages of the Overture. True, in the Wedding March, the bride and bridegroom are swept down the aisle at a pace more brisk than ceremonial, but the result is never less than exhilarating.

Saleem Ashkar, too, echoes Chailly's high-flying approach with a dexterity as immaculate as it is awe-inspiring, the finales of both concertos taken at a speed that less gifted pianists can only envy. The rush to the finishing post is breathtaking; and if you occasionally miss the more pointed character and wit of Schiff or Perahia, you welcome an ideal poise in the slow movements, full of cool inflections that are personal without being mannered. Ashkar's is an art that disguises art and his performances are among the finest in the catalogue. Balance between pianist and orchestra is exemplary and all these performances lift the spirits, negating all notions of Victorian sentimentality.

Bryce Morrison

Pf Concs - selected comparisons:

Schiff, Bavarian RSO, Dutoit

(10/83⁸, 5/86⁸) (DECC) 466 425-2DM

Perahia, ASMF, Marriner (7/75⁸, 11/87⁸) (SONY)

88697 00818-2 or 88697 56167-2

Mendelssohn

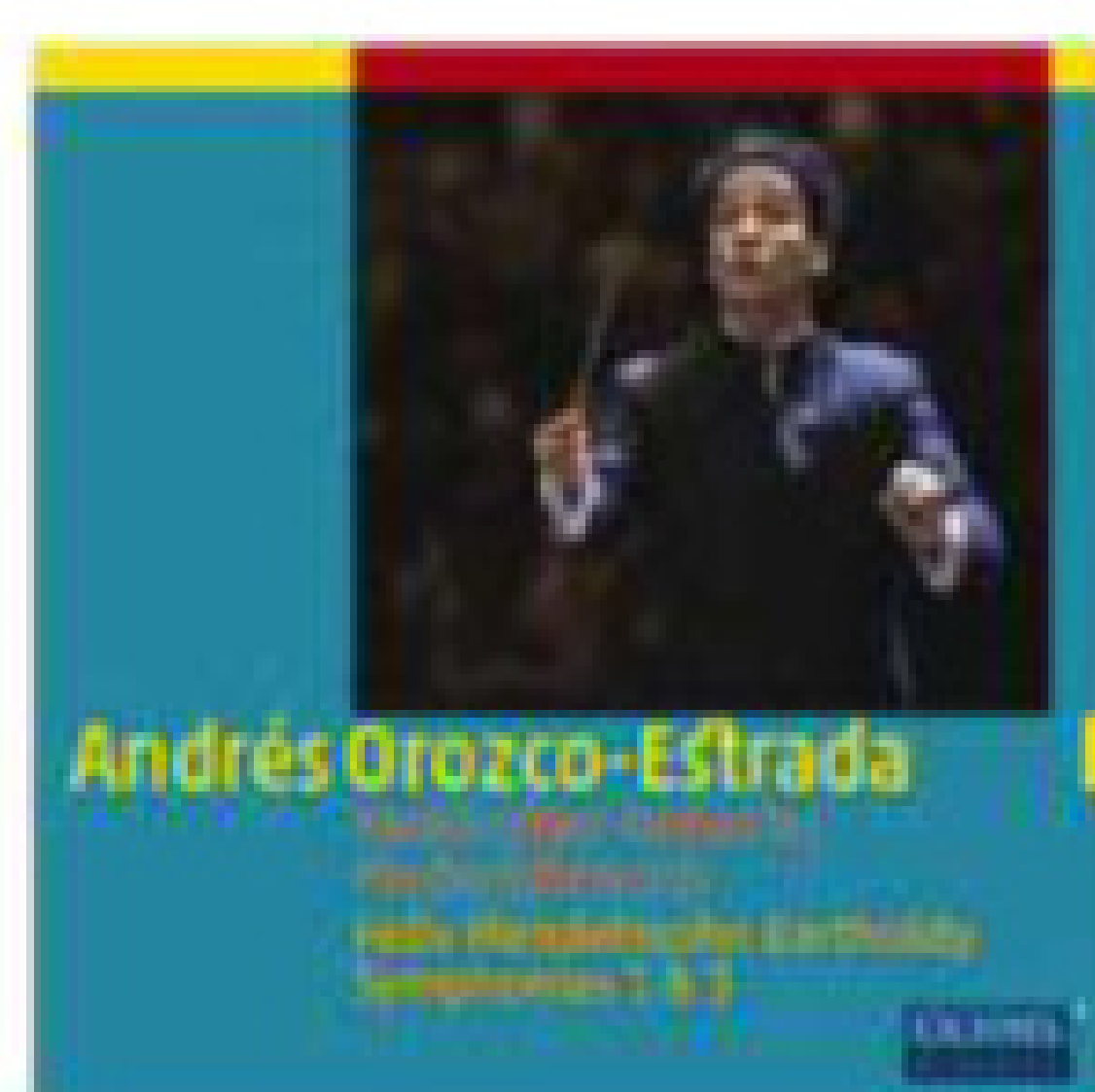
Symphonies - No 1, Op 11; No 3, 'Scottish', Op 56

Tonkünstler Orchestra, Lower Austria /

Andrés Orozco-Estrada

Oehms © OC898 (70' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna



The last version of Mendelssohn's First that I listened to featured Thomas Fey and the Heidelberg Symphony (Hänssler), a rugged, high-energy affair, forcefully played and brilliantly recorded. Put on Andrés Orozco-Estrada and the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich straight afterwards and the energy level takes a noticeable dip, especially among the

strings, where there's a noticeable lack of bite. Things improve considerably for the brief but beautiful *Andante*, where Orozco-Estrada chooses a marginally broader tempo than Fey's, tracing a shapely line for the opening string melody, encouraging the clarinets to confirm the mood with a mellifluous pooled tone then tracing the downward trajectory of the lower strings on their return, and so on. The Minuet is well paced but again softer-edged than I would have liked and the finale (a dead ringer for the finale of Mozart's big G minor) ambles along gracefully, though someone has thrown a bucket of water over the *con fuoco* element.

A shame, because Orozco-Estrada obviously has a feeling for the more lyrical elements in Mendelssohn's symphonies, as is obvious from his reading of the *Scottish* Symphony's wonderful *Adagio*, where the climactic moments with their fiercely rolling tims recall another third symphony, the one with a mighty 'Marcia funebre'. Orozco-Estrada's penchant for softer textures works well in the Third's *scherzo*, which is light and generally well played, but the main body of the first movement is too often plagued by a feeling of listlessness. I think I understand what Orozco-Estrada is getting at; but put on the more animated Heinz Holliger with the Musikkollegium Winterthur (MDG; coupled with the second version of the *Italian*) and the screws are tightened, the bolts with them, so that what's pictured within the frame seems so much better focused. Also Holliger plays the *Scottish* Symphony's important first-movement repeat which Orozco-Estrada omits. Overall, rather disappointing. **Rob Cowan**

Mozart

Violin Concertos - No 3, K216;

No 4, K218; No 5, K219

Arabella Steinbacher vn

Festival Strings Lucerne / Daniel Dodds

Pentatone © PTC5186 479 (78' • DDD/DSD)



In the booklet accompanying this issue, Arabella Steinbacher writes:

'These concertos have been with me since early childhood...I feel they are very close to my heart.' Anybody tempted to dismiss this as a marketing ploy will soon change their minds on listening to these performances - they really do give the impression of a project backed by an unusual degree of sympathetic understanding.

Steinbacher has a way of searching out what gives each passage, each phrase, its individuality, getting it to speak to us through slight changes in dynamic or emphasis. Nothing is forced: the quick movements are fast enough for the passagework to sound brilliant but always with space for elegant shaping. The Lucerne Festival Strings are a small enough body to allow even accompanying lines to be played in a positive, lively manner (notice the variants in the support the violins give to the returns of the rondo theme in K216's finale). A top-class recording enhances the sensation of keen participation. Steinbacher finds her sweetest tone for the slow movements; elsewhere, there's a strong awareness of the sense of fun that pervades many parts of these youthful masterpieces. And she finds an extra injection of fire for the Turkish episode in K219's finale.

The purist in me noticed occasional over-smooth articulation and, at the other extreme, very short *spiccato* bow strokes (in the finale of K218, for example). But these are minor issues, within these highly individual, deeply satisfying accounts.

Duncan Druce

Mozart

Symphonies – No 39, K543;

No 40, K550; No 41, 'Jupiter', K551

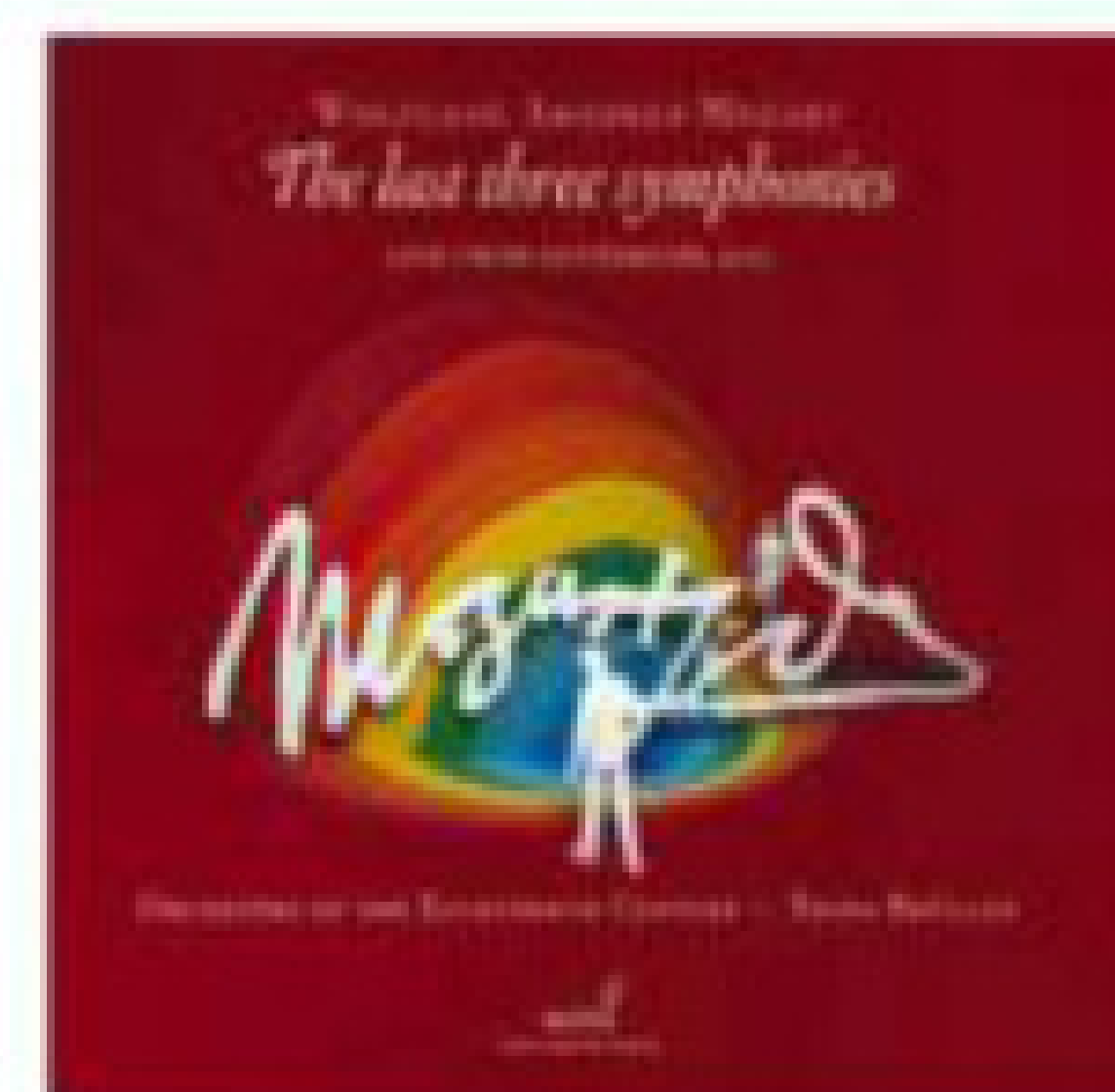
Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century /

Frans Brüggen

Glossa (M) ② GCD921119 (92' • DDD)

Recorded live at De Doelen, Rotterdam,

March 4, 2010



Brüggen mirrors Mozart's love of clarinets in the balance at the beginning of

No 39, the reverberation of Rotterdam's De Doelen hall in this live recording adding warmth to the texture but also blurring the bass-line somewhat, timpani excepted. Played with hard sticks, they cut through in a majestic *Adagio*, Brüggen finding time to draw out a sense of longing from the rising notes of the flute flanking dotted rhythms, not edgily militant as they are in Mackerras's performance. He shortens the note-values. Brüggen doesn't; and his broad approach extends to the main *Allegro*, conjuring perhaps an image of the 19th century rather than its predecessor. But Brüggen, once in the forefront of historically informed practices, has gradually been ploughing his own furrow; and these discs offer examples of his current thoughts that nonetheless still

incorporate swift minuets and the use of period instruments. Not heard anywhere is a literal sound-facsimile of notes. Brüggen interprets them as he feels fit.

How he feels about No 40 has changed in the 23 years since his last recording (Philips – nla). Though the outer movements, *Molto allegro* and *Allegro assai* respectively, are almost identical to their earlier pacing, accents are now more tellingly pointed, phrases more expressively shaped without compromising momentum. But the exposition repeat in the finale has been dropped and there are none in the *Andante*. Claudio Abbado, Benjamin Britten and Mackerras repeat both halves as instructed. And Brüggen obeys the similar marking in No 39's finale yet, unlike others, preserves the surprise of an abrupt ending by giving the last bar a new twist the second time.

What of No 41, the largest in scale? Mackerras with modern instruments appears grand and thrusting, Brüggen initially more sober, impressed on by a dull acoustic and the lower pitch of the orchestra. But heroics aren't muted; they are presented differently. So are the unwritten shadings in colour and meaning of the slow movement, the fugal finale mightily imposing, the purpose of observing every repeat in this work understood. As always, discretion replaces dogma. **Nalen Anthoni**

Syms Nos 39 & 41 – selected comparison:

Mannheim Mozart Orch, Fey (PROF) PH05047

Sym No 40 – selected comparisons:

ECO, Britten (10/68^R, 5/14) (DECC) 478 5672DC27

Orch Mozart, Abbado (1/12) (DG) 477 9792AH

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

SCO, Mackerras (4/08) (LINN) CKD308

Nørgård

Symphonies –

No 1, 'Sinfonia austera', Op 13; No 8^a

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Sakari Oramo

Dacapo (F) ② 6 220574 (57' • DDD/DSD)

^aRecorded live at the Vienna Konzerthaus



There is a gulf of some 55 years between Nørgård's first and latest

symphonies. The one nails its colours to the masts of Sibelius's First Symphony and Holmboe's Eighth, those composers being respectively the idol and the teacher of Nørgård in his early twenties. The other is fully emancipated from those and any other influences.

And yet, as has often been pointed out, the ideas of Nordic light against the

background of darkness, of metamorphosis as a principle of life as well as of art, and of hard-won coalescence into fundamental acoustic properties (not excluding 'tonal' triads), are constant factors in an output as astonishing for its consistency as for its range. The Eighth Symphony may be relatively genial by comparison with its predecessors, including the gritty First. It doesn't have the dizzying craziness of Nørgård's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, their sense of getting high on chaos and higher still on its artistic shaping. But it is still the work of a composer obsessed with the elemental qualities of musical movement and shape.

From the outset, cascading scalar motion is balanced against lines that push towards the upper limits of instrumental ranges, while other shapes anchor the middle of the texture, without ever quite declaring themselves as 'themes'. The gambit is familiar from several of Nørgård's earlier symphonies (certainly Nos 3, 4 and 6), and as there every moment feels full of potential, the product of a fertile imagination that seemingly grows in direct proportion to its deployment. Nothing smacks of effect-mongering or hand-me-down cliché.

Like the First Symphony, the Eighth is in three movements, the first being the longest and densest. The difference is that the finale of the Eighth, after a return to the first movement's state of constant flux, culminates in a *Lento visionario*. Here it doesn't seem over-imaginative to posit Sibelius as the godfather, especially where the opening cascades are transfigured.

Great to see this superabundantly imaginative music being taken up by an institution as traditionally minded as the Vienna Philharmonic. Honours are even with the Danish RSO and Segerstam in the First Symphony (coupled with No 2). But the premiere recording of No 8 is a must-have, and not only for followers of Nørgård and the 21st-century symphony. Dacapo's recording is as beautiful as the Vienna Phil's playing, and the essay by Jens Cornelius balances information with sensitive response. **David Fanning**

Sym No 1 – selected comparison:

Danish Nat RSO, Segerstam (CHAN) CHAN9450

Read Richard Whitehouse's report from the recording sessions at gramophone.co.uk/features

Schnyder • R Strauss

Schnyder Krisis. Psalm^a

R Strauss Metamorphosen

^aSusanna Levenon *sop* NDR Radio

Philharmonic Orchestra / Kristjan Järvi

Marsyas (F) MAR1808-2 (54' • DDD)

Recorded 2004

hyperion NEW RELEASES

SERGE PROKOFIEV

Violin Sonatas

Hyperion is delighted to present a collaboration—an extraordinary force on the concert platform—in its first appearance on record. Alina Ibragimova and Steven Osborne are musicians of searing, uncompromising intelligence and intense feeling. In his works for the violin, Prokofiev produced some of his most personal and expressive music.



CDA67514

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Piano Concertos Nos 22 & 24

Writing in *The Observer*, Stephen Pritchard wrote of the first volume in this series: 'Judging from this first example, it's going to be a journey as revelatory as her exploration of all the major keyboard works of Bach.' Here Angela Hewitt is joined by her compatriot National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada and frequent collaborator Hannu Lintu for sparkingly stylish renditions of Concertos Nos 22 and 24.



CDA68049

THE ROMANTIC VIOLIN CONCERTO – 16

Busoni & Strauss

German violinist Tanja Becker-Bender returns to the Romantic Violin Concerto series having dazzled the critics with her 'great lyrical force and tremendous sense of drama' in her recording of the Reger concerto. Here she appears with Hyperion house band the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Garry Walker, in Volume 16: concertos by Busoni and Strauss, each composer's only example of the genre.



CDA68044

FRANK BRIDGE

Songs

'A most timely and valuable addition to the catalogue' (*Gramophone*) 'Prepared and performed with the care and conviction for which Hyperion is famous ... distinguished performances of little-known but substantial and often impressive repertoire' (*Classic CD*) TWO DISCS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE



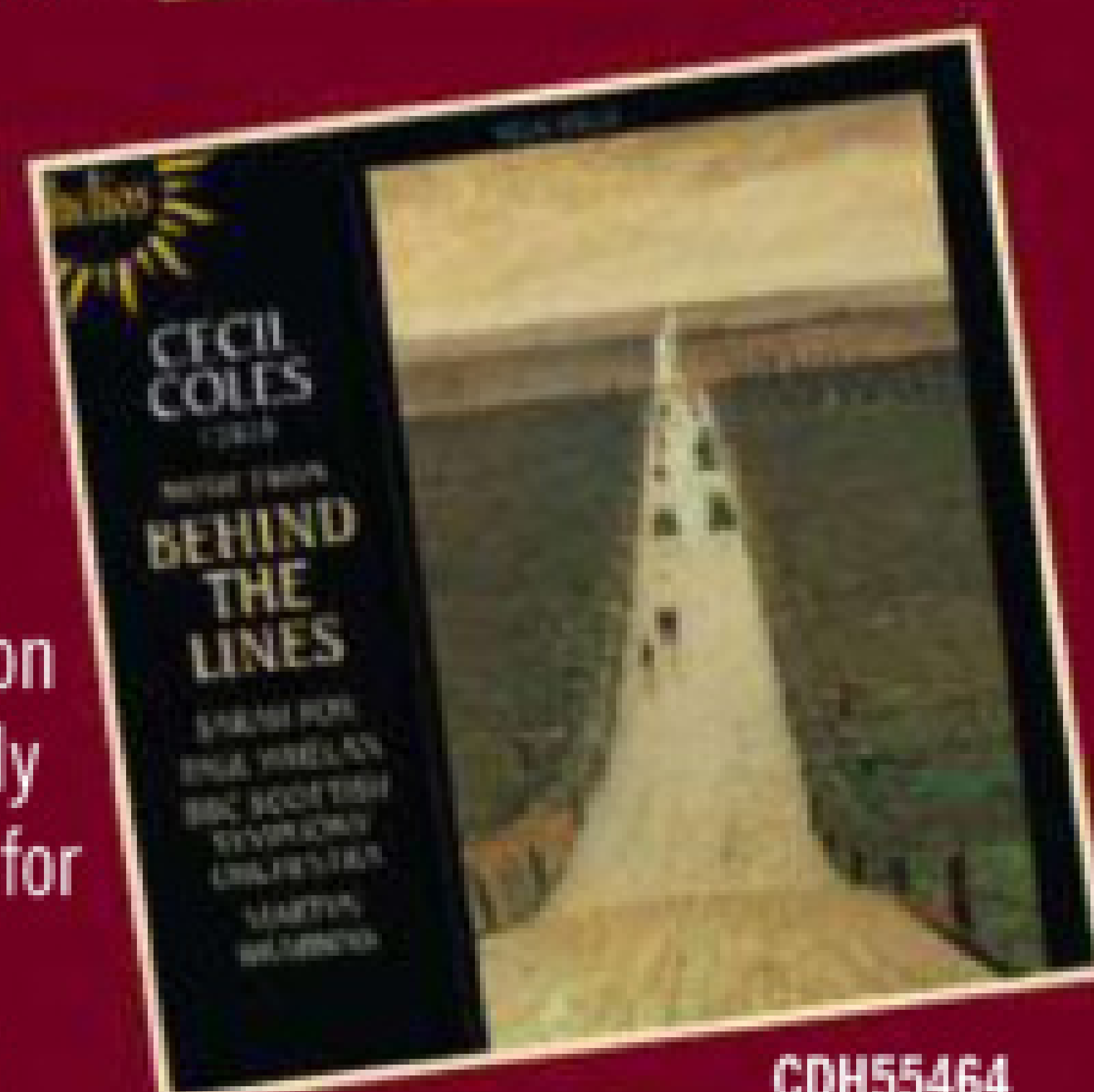
CD022071



CECIL COLES

Behind the lines

'A fascinating and rewarding discovery ... performances, production and presentation are all past praise' (*Gramophone*) 'My reactions to the music, even after listening to the disc for some weeks, still oscillate between amazement, melancholy, and gratitude, although they are gradually melding into a fusion of all three. I don't doubt that it will affect you too' (*Fanfare*, USA)



CDH55464



SIR CHARLES STANFORD

String Quartets

'This is fine music, beautifully played' (*The Sunday Times*) 'These exemplary first recordings make the best possible case for all this rare material; sound and balance are first-class, too. A strongly recommendable issue' (*Gramophone*)

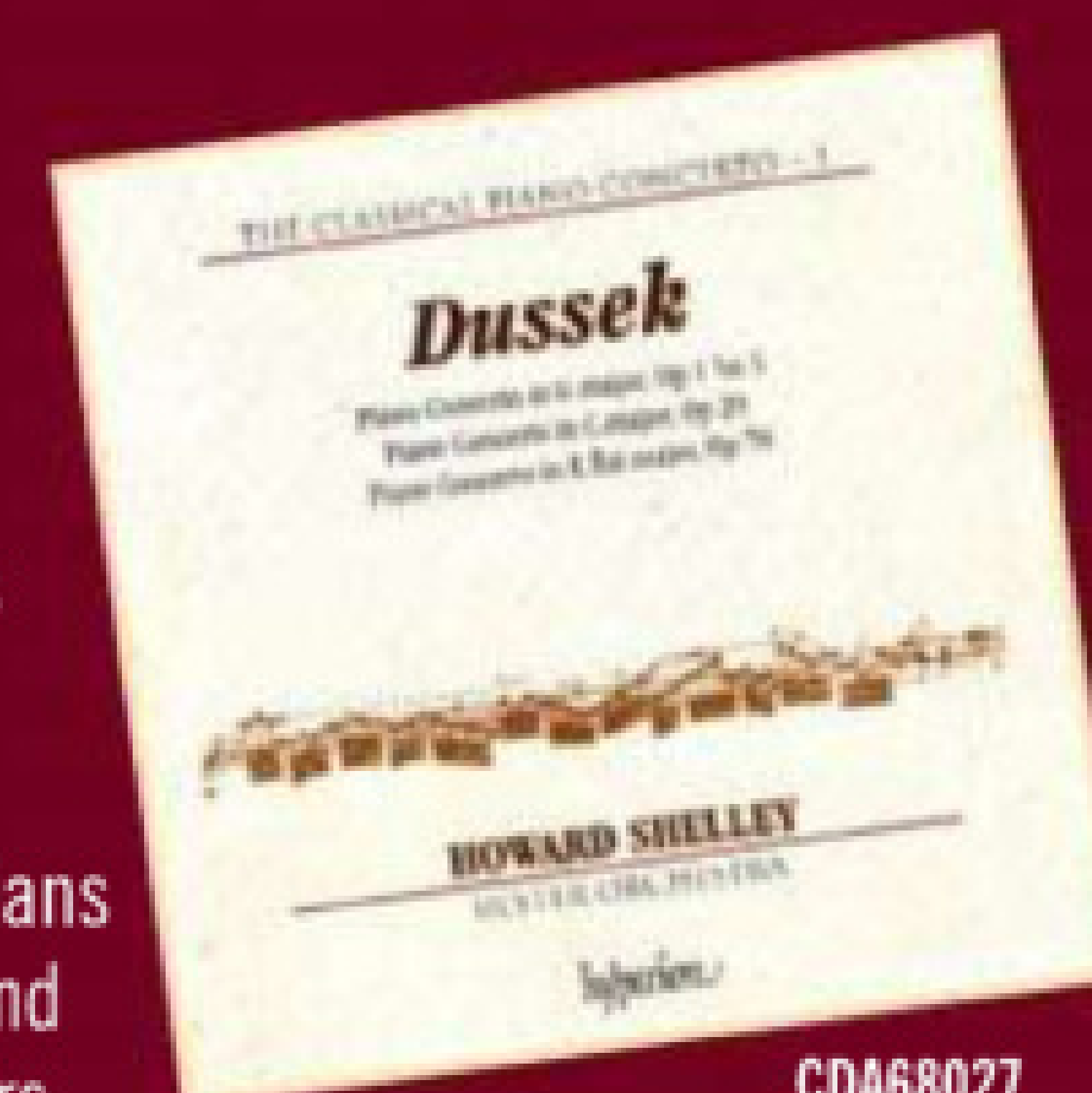


CDH55459

THE CLASSICAL PIANO CONCERTO – 1

Dussek

Following on from Hyperion's popular Romantic Piano Concerto series, The Classical Piano Concerto focuses on the lesser-known concertos from the dawn of the genre. Between about 1770 and 1820—the period dominated by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven—musicians including Clementi, Cramer, Dussek, Steibelt, Woelfl and others made their names as composers and performers of piano concertos. This series aims to be the first in-depth recorded survey of this forgotten repertoire. This first volume features three of Bohemian virtuoso Jan Ladislav Dussek's eighteen piano concertos.

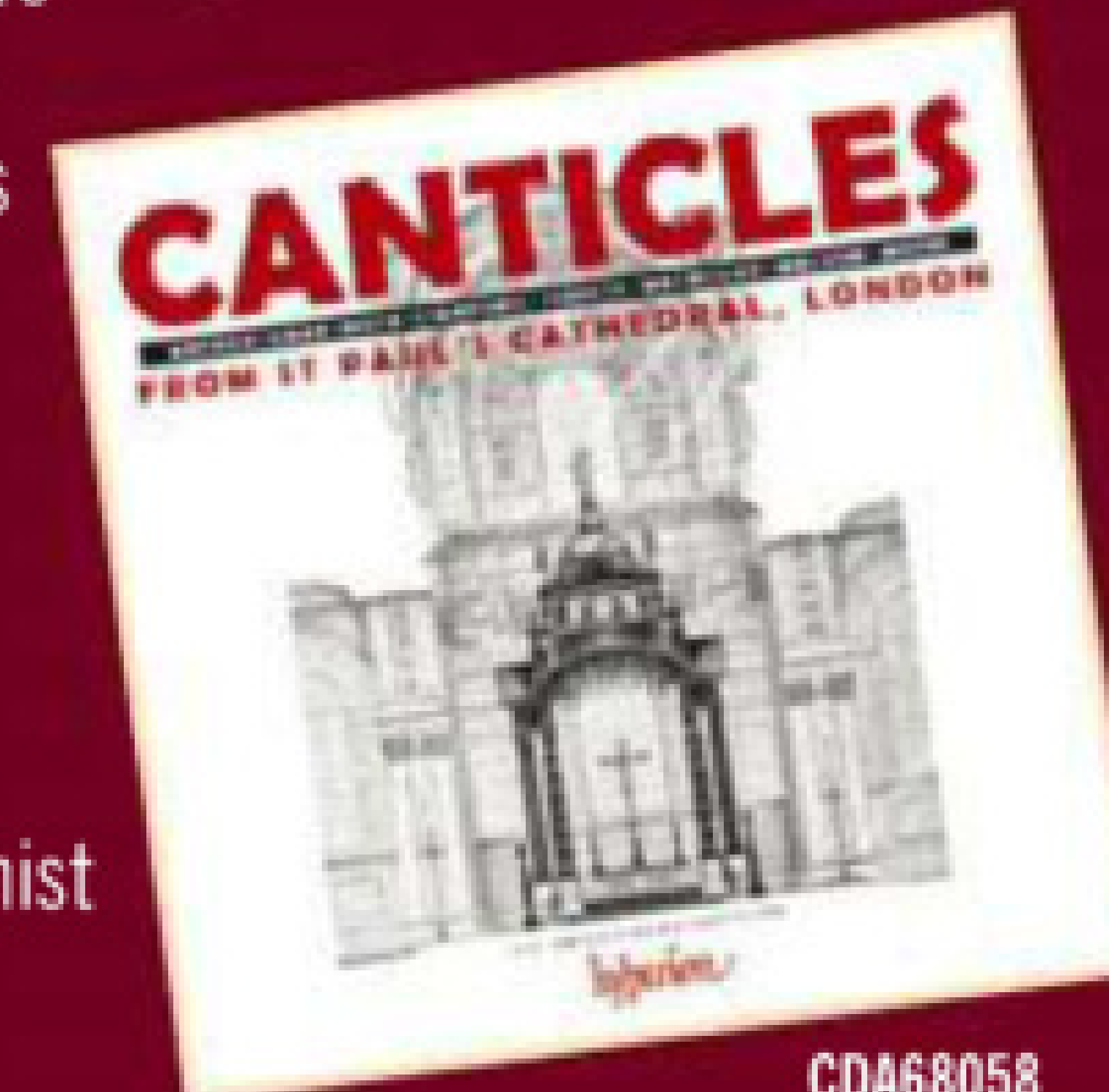


CDA68027

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL CHOIR

Canticles from St Paul's

The world-famous St Paul's Cathedral Choir and organist Simon Johnson under their director Andrew Carwood perform classic and contemporary settings of the Canticles: the crowning glory of the Anglican liturgy.

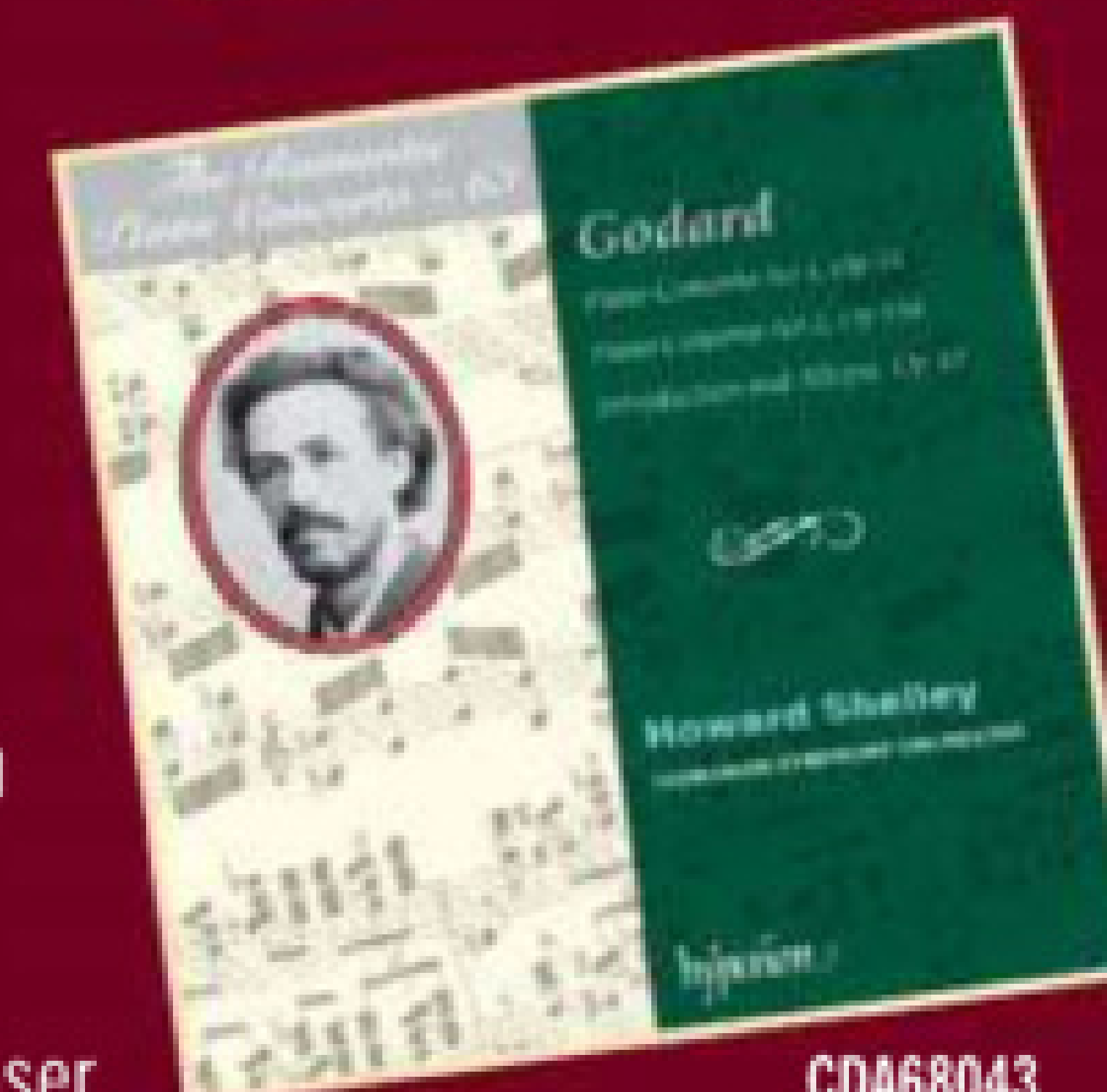


CDA68058

THE ROMANTIC PIANO CONCERTO – 63

Godard

Howard Shelley directs the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra from the piano in this latest volume of The Romantic Piano Concerto series. As ever, they perform unknown music with consummate style and deep understanding. We have reached Volume 63 and the works of French composer Benjamin Godard, a composer who combines the sentimental melodic appeal of Massenet with the fecundity and technical facility of Saint-Saëns.

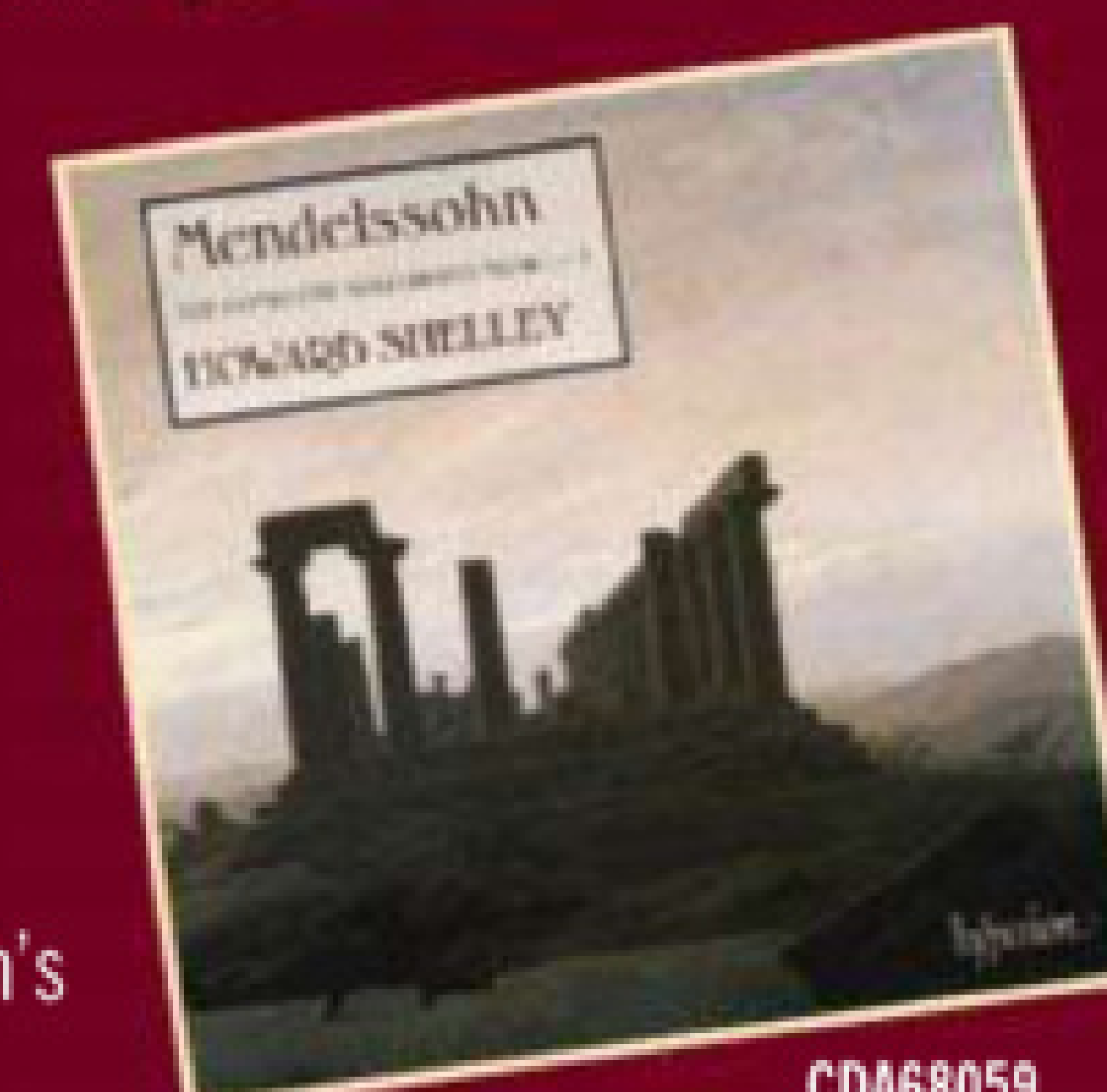


CDA68043

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

The Complete Solo Piano Music – 2

Howard Shelley is acclaimed as the living master of early Romantic piano music. Here he presents the second instalment of a six-volume set of Mendelssohn's solo piano music. This volume includes the Rondo capriccioso, a favourite virtuoso concert piece of the nineteenth century; the three-movement Fantasia in F sharp minor, which was originally described as a 'Sonate écossaise', with its characteristic Scottish folk-song elements in the first movement, and two books of the Songs without Words.



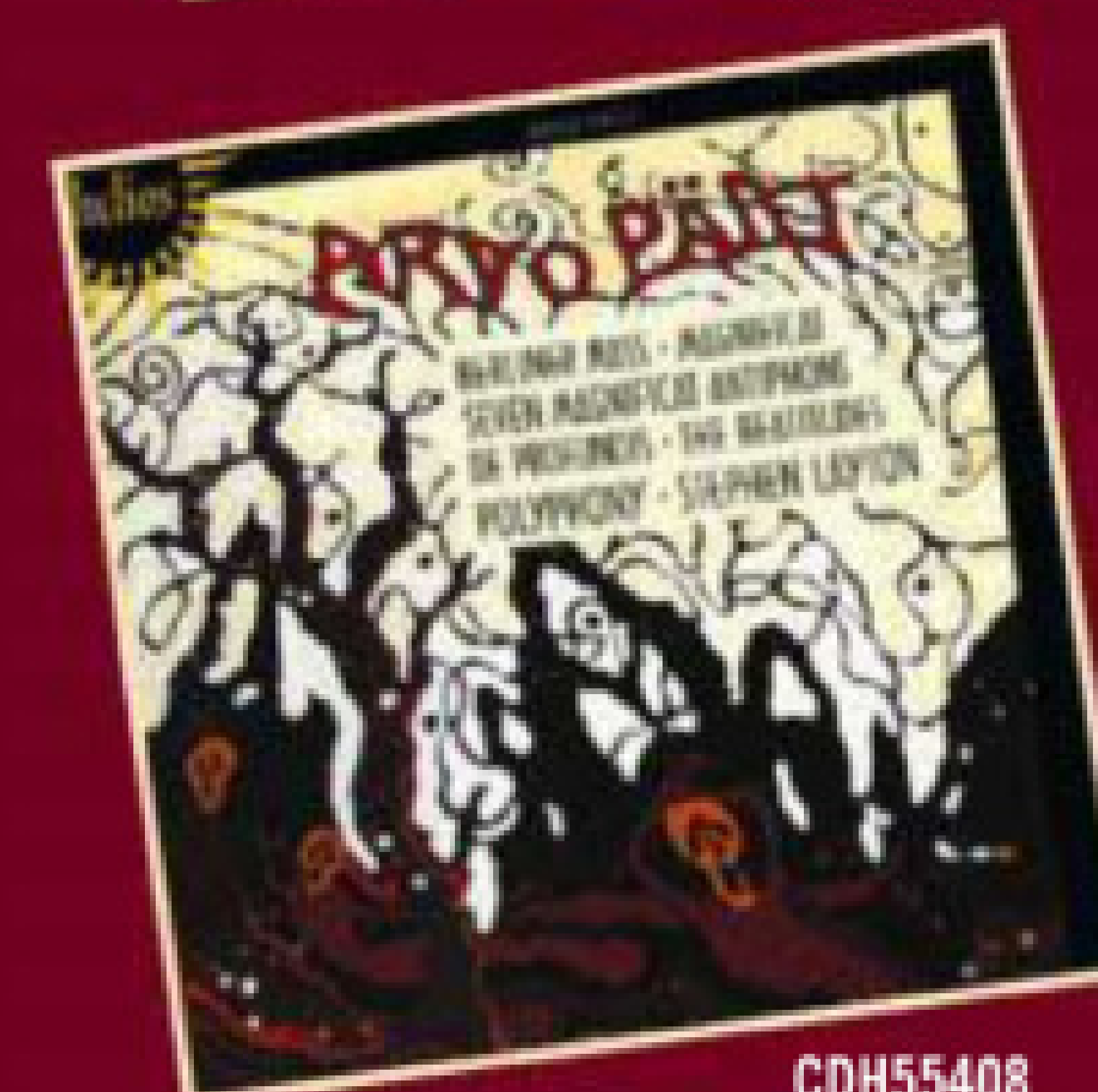
CDA68059



ARVO PÄRT

Berliner Messe

'Polyphony's singing is immensely cultivated; bright, clear, immaculately phrased, and gorgeously balanced' (*American Record Guide*) 'Pärt's music remains an object of unstinting wonder' (*BBC Music Magazine*)



CDH55408



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Early Cantatas

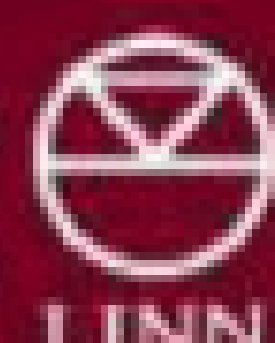
PENGUIN GUIDE ROSETTE
'There are some lovely performances here, especially from Corydon Singers themselves ... this is a fascinating disc' (*BBC Record Review*)



CDH55479

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Numerous composers (American and otherwise) have penned tributes to those who

died as a result of 9/11, though Daniel Schnyder (b1961) came up with an interesting concept in that his brace of pieces is intended to frame Richard Strauss's valedictory masterpiece for strings.

Of the Schnyder works, *Krisis* is in itself a trilogy where the ominous initial depiction of 'Darkness and Sorrow' leads into a central depiction of 'Rage and Ire' via a tensile fugue that culminates in the final 'Prayer and Transformation' with its inward if hardly tranquil recalling of earlier ideas. Tranquillity as such comes with *Psalm*, the setting in English of lines from the Aramaic with the soprano's Hebrew-inflected cantilena (eloquently sung by Susanna Levonen) heard against an orchestral backdrop of undoubted harmonic richness and translucency. Striking and thought-provoking pieces, they inevitably pale within the context of Strauss's *Metamorphosen* – which, whether it commemorates the destruction of German opera houses or the more general demise of Germanic culture, is among the most all-encompassing, because so rigorously achieved, musical threnodies of the last century.

This latter work receives a capable account from Kristjan Järvi and his North German Radio forces, rhythmically alert and with unerring focus as the music evolves towards its plangent culmination. That there are finer versions is arguably beside the point given its function in the present concept, with Järvi amply conveying the emotive force of the Schnyder.

Richard Whitehouse

Shostakovich • Tchaikovsky

Shostakovich Symphony No 6, Op 54^a

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique', Op 74^b

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900123 (75' • DDD)

Recorded live at the ^aHerkulesaal, ^bPhilharmonie
im Gasteig, Munich, 2013



It was an inspired idea to couple two great Sixth Symphonies that inhabit, respectively, the 19th and 20th centuries, both of them tragic, and both unconventional in their

very different approaches to symphonic structure, the earlier of the two ending with a slow movement, the later work beginning with one. By coincidence, while listening to Jansons's Shostakovich, Valery Gergiev's Mariinsky recording arrived on my mat and the interpretative polarity between them is telling. In the opening *Adagio*, Gergiev's extra breadth (18'38" as opposed to Jansons's 15'41") not only makes for a humbling sense of desolation but the Mariinsky string-players are more overtly expressive. Sample the convergence of string choirs at 4'16" (Jansons) and 4'54" (Gergiev) and the contrast is fairly obvious. Elsewhere the tempo bias is reversed, Gergiev sounding rather like soft-option Mravinsky whereas Jansons, who in the Leningrad Philharmonic days was Mravinsky's assistant, more approximates his master's style, not in terms of tempo but in the quick-witted exchanges between desks and soloists, especially in the symphony's finale, which is also far better recorded than the Mariinsky disc where, at the very end of the work, the all-important timpani are rather muffled. Jansons's precise approach veers in the direction of chamber music writ large, which inclines me towards his version in preference to Gergiev's, good though the latter is. But that's just one symphony in a collection of three that will be reviewed elsewhere.

Meanwhile we have Jansons's full-bodied, richly expressed *Pathétique*, another reading that brings Mravinsky to mind and that marks an overall improvement over Jansons's exciting though less subtly expressed version with the Oslo Philharmonic. Tempi here are marginally broader than before, the playing has greater warmth and so has the recording, quite different to Chandos's harder-edged, more resonant option. The first movement's principal climax is overwhelming (the triple *forte* strings project more effectively than they do on Nézet-Séguin's recent recording) and Jansons holds the fast pace for the close of the third movement. Given the overall excellence of the Shostakovich, I'd place this version a notch or two above the Nézet-Séguin disc, where the coupling is a series of Tchaikovsky songs transcribed for violin and piano and played by Lisa Batiashvili. Nice to have but not as musically important as the Shostakovich symphony. **Rob Cowan**

Shostakovich – selected comparison:

Mariinsky Orch, Gergiev (MARI) MAR0545

Tchaikovsky – selected comparison:

Oslo PO, Jansons (1/87^R, 5/87) (CHAN)

CHAN8446 or CHAN10392

Rotterdam PO, Nézet-Séguin (12/13) (DG) 479 0835GH

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Gabrieli back to Handel

Just as England were being knocked out of the World Cup in mid-June, Paul McCreesh and his **Gabrieli Consort and Players** were wrapping up their recording of Handel's pastoral ode *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* at St Silas the Martyr in Kentish Town, London. Winged Lion, the Gabrieli's own imprint on Signum Classics, will release the disc in early 2015. Soloists include Jeremy Ovenden and Peter Harvey.

• South coast Prokofiev

In the very same week, **Kirill Karabits** was at The Lighthouse in Poole to record the second disc in his Onyx Prokofiev cycle with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (the first instalment was an Editor's Choice in



Gramophone's June issue). Included on the disc will be the first two symphonies, the *Autumn Sketch* and the *Sinfonietta*. Onyx will release the disc this coming November.

• Kopatchinskaja in Switzerland

Erstwhile Recording of the Year winner at the *Gramophone* Awards **Patricia Kopatchinskaja** has recorded her latest disc for Naïve in Switzerland. The disc, entitled 'Take Two', will include music by Cage, Gibbons, Holliger, Leclair, Paganini, Sotelo and Zykan, and sees the violinist collaborating with fellow musicians (including a DJ) and a poet. Naïve will release the disc next year.

• More Janáček from Netopil

After garnering an Editor's Choice for his disc of orchestral works by Leoš Janáček, Czech conductor **Tomáš Netopil** has recorded the composer's *Glagolitic Mass* and the rarely heard gem *The Eternal Gospel* with his Prague Philharmonic Choir and Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra forces. The soloists include Andrea Danková and Pavel Černoch, and Supraphon will release the resulting recordings this autumn.

Shostakovich

Symphony No 7, 'Leningrad', Op 60

Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder

Hallé © CDHLL7537 (76' • DDD)

Recorded live at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, October 3, 2013



I was at The Bridgewater Hall last October for the performance captured

here on disc (the recording makes use of rehearsals, too, but the feel of the live event is by no means lost and the outburst of raucous applause at the end is left in). I had also been at Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall in January 2012 to hear Petrenko and the RLPO in the same symphony, which they recorded six months afterwards.

The contrast was remarkable. Petrenko embarked on the first movement with a curious slackness and an absence of forward impetus that could have been his way of saying 'don't forget the marking is *Allegretto*, not *Allegro*' (it's worth noting that Mravinsky, conductor of the first performance, had no such qualms). Elder, on the other hand, launched into that opening with momentum, power and definition in equal measure. And that set him on course for a performance that was a real experience, as opposed to Petrenko's more detached reading.

This may not be as surprising as it sounds. Anyone who caught *The Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* at English National Opera in the late 1980s will know how deep Elder's affinity with Shostakovich runs; and he conducts the *Leningrad* with an equally sure instinct for large-scale drama. Detail is there aplenty (the articulation of that first-movement opening, for instance, is both imaginative and perfectly idiomatic), but the overriding impression is of unfailing dramatic tension over the entire 76-minute span. Petrenko's Shostakovich, on the other hand, has had its hits and misses, the latter usually because of self-consciously spaced-out tempi, insufficiently supported by intensity or eloquence in the phrasing. He takes only three minutes longer overall but the impression sometimes borders on the lethargic.

Both accounts are superb in the long accumulation of the finale (at the beginning of which it is Petrenko who for once sounds the more involved). But the inner movements, almost wherever you sample them, show Elder with his finger more surely on the pulse and his orchestra more resourceful in its colours and sheer heft.

The Naxos recording admittedly gives the RLPO more of a boost. But with the right adjustment the Hallé's finds more natural perspectives and accommodates the climaxes with more shattering impact. That impact, however, boils down to the conducting more than anything else.

David Fanning

Selected comparison:

RLPO, Petrenko (6/13) (NAXO) 8 573057

Sibelius

Lemminkäinen Suite, Op 22.

The Wood-Nymph, Op 15

Lahti Symphony Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä

BIS © BIS1745 (70' • DDD/DSD)

The Swan of Tuonela, Lemminkäinen's Return and The Wood-Nymph from BIS1645



Four Legends (from the Kalevala), Lemminkäinen Suite, Lemminkäinen Legends

– none of the popular titles for this tetralogy better Sibelius's own albeit prosaic *Symphonic Poems on Motifs from the Lemminkäinen Myth*. Vänskä welds the four independent works into a coherent whole, a process helped immeasurably by his placing the brief *The Swan of Tuonela* second, forming a more dramatically and symphonically satisfying long-short-long-short profile, as Neeme Järvi among others did, while the otherwise excellent Segerstam and Sakari did not.

Vänskä's previous recording of these works (featuring the original versions) in Lahti was bedevilled by technical issues; happily this new issue – set down between November 2006 and October 2007 – is free of these. As ever with Vänskä, the interpretation is full of incidental insights, the Lahti Symphony Orchestra's playing captured in excellent sound. True, Segerstam's Ondine recording with the Helsinki Philharmonic has richer, fuller sound, while Järvi's wonderful Gothenburg issue still sounds fine, emphasising the drama above all. Play Segerstam with *The Swan* second and you have a near-ideal account; the new Vänskä is a fine alternative, more searching than the other rivals listed below.

And it is paired with the best account yet of *The Wood-Nymph*, the tone-poem that forms the link between the *Karelia* music and *Lemminkäinen*. If it perhaps lacks the structural cohesion of *En saga* in its revised form it is still an impressive work. It's grippingly played here, even more so than their original 1995 version. BIS's sound, as ever, is superb. **Guy Rickards**

Lemminkäinen Suite – selected comparisons:

Gothenburg SO, N Järvi (6/86) (BIS) BIS-CD294

Helsinki PO, Segerstam (7/96) (ONDI) ODE852-2

Iceland SO, Sakari (9/99) (NAXO) 8 554265

Lahti SO, Vänskä (12/99) (BIS) BIS-CD1015

Wood-Nymph – selected comparison:

Lahti SO, Vänskä (6/96) (BIS) BIS-CD815

Stenhammar

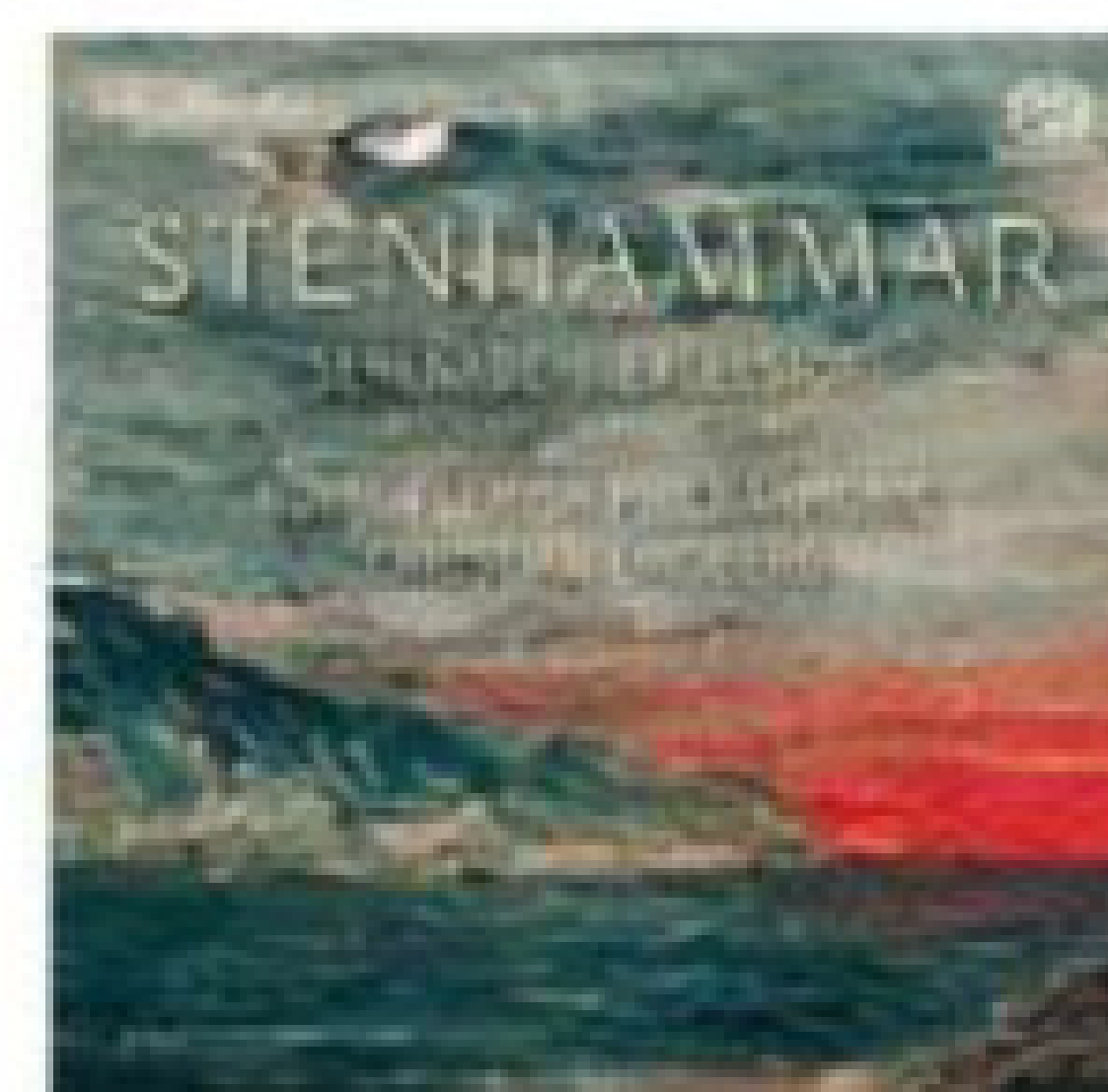
Excelsior!, Op 13. Serenade, Op 31.

The Song, Op 44 – Interlude

Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra /

Christian Lindberg

BIS © BIS2058 (58' • DDD/DSD)



Wilhelm Stenhammar has never really had his due. Overshadowed by his Nordic

contemporaries Grieg, Nielsen and Sibelius, his productivity hampered by a hyper-self-criticality even more acute than his Finnish contemporary's, when he finalised a work the result was superb, nowhere more so than the Serenade in F, an unalloyed joy from first note to last through five beautifully balanced and designed movements.

Admittedly, it did take him a while to get right. The idea originated in a visit to Florence in 1907 and the finished work perhaps describes the revelry and romance of a sleepless Florentine night. The Serenade was not ready until 1914, in six movements, opening and closing in E major. It was not a success and it was only in 1919 that the work found its final, F major, five-movement format (the discarded second movement, 'Reverenza', has been revived but not here; a shame as there is room). Lindberg and the Flemish musicians audibly relish its subtle construction in a performance rivalling both of Järvi's, in top-notch sound.

The fillers round out the picture of Stenhammar for those unfamiliar with his music. The symphonic overture *Excelsior!* (1896) – which has only come into its own in the last 30 years – shows the young composer on the road towards the wonderful G minor Symphony. Lindberg is markedly slower than Järvi but compels attention. Stenhammar's lyrical genius is illustrated by the Interlude from the substantial cantata *Sången* (1921), which he subtitled a 'sinfonia vocale'. A marvellous disc which makes a fine introduction to a marvellous composer. **Guy Rickards**

Excelsior!, Serenade – selected comparison:

Gothenburg SO, N Järvi (8/95) (DG) 445 857-2GH2

Serenade – selected comparison:

Gothenburg SO, N Järvi (2/87) (BIS) BIS-CD310

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

THE MELBOURNE SYMPHONY

Geoffrey Norris listens to live recordings from a renewed partnership between Melbourne's orchestra and Australia's state broadcaster



Sir Andrew Davis conducting the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at Hamer Hall

Released in advance of its visit to the Proms on August 19, these three Melbourne Symphony Orchestra releases, all recorded at live performances in the Melbourne Arts Centre's Hamer Hall, reveal a healthy range of repertoire and an orchestra of versatility to match it. The MSO's association with ABC began back in 2008 with the complete Tchaikovsky symphonies but among the earliest of these fairly recent discs is the two-CD set of the **Brahms** piano concertos, taken from concerts in November 2012. The sound is attractively natural rather than over-engineered, ample when necessary but also acute enough to pick up the delicacy and poetic restraint of the slow movements. Garrick Ohlsson, familiar in Brahms from his 2010 Hyperion disc of the solo variations, is a pianist who combines finely toned muscle with mollifying sensitivity. His interpretative scope and focus are compellingly applied to both concertos here, with his energy, precision and shrewdly judged weighting in the more robust music of the outer movements tempered by the mellow refinement he brings to Brahms in more meditative mood. In this repertoire, Emil Gilels with the Berlin Philharmonic under Eugen Jochum on DG is in a class of his own but this Melbourne coupling is a thoroughly welcome and keenly competitive addition to the 21st-century catalogue. Tadaaki Otaka conducts with a judicious sense of

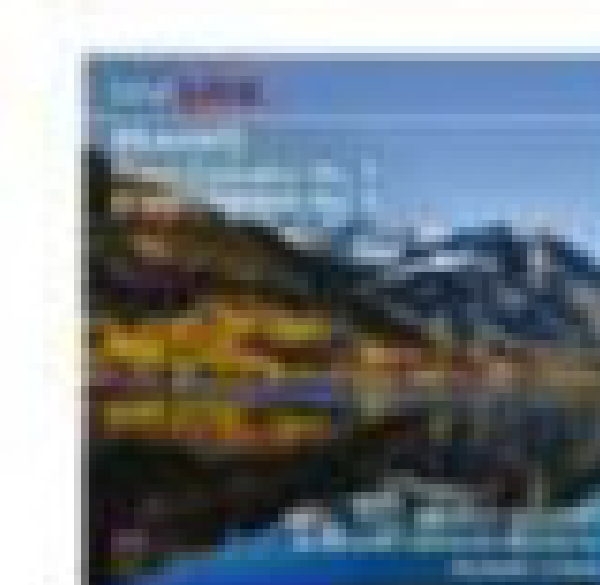
pace, musical direction and flexibility, and the orchestra itself speaks the Brahmsian language with fluency, confidence and a range of inflection – not least in the serene cello solo of the B flat Concerto's third movement – that conveys its subtleties of colouring as well as its dynamism.

A much shorter disc of only about 35 minutes is nevertheless one that highlights the MSO's boldness of programming, **Thomas Adès's** *Polaris* – *Voyage for Orchestra* coming from performances in August 2012, **Paul Stanhope's** Piccolo Concerto from June last year. *Polaris* was commissioned by the New World Symphony for the opening of its new Miami hall in 2011 but the 15-minute piece was swiftly picked up by Melbourne and this is currently the only commercial recording of it. That in itself is a recommendation but the playing under Markus Stenz is also thoroughly attuned to the constellation of sound that Adès conjures up in a score that pits powerful utterances against a fluid backdrop of feverish instrumental activity and shifting patterns of sonority. The piccolo sometimes pierces its way through the texture, providing, as it were, a neat up-beat to the Piccolo Concerto by the Australian composer Paul Stanhope. This one is conducted by Benjamin Northey, the orchestra's Associate Conductor (Sir Andrew Davis is Chief Conductor, the young Venezuelan Diego Matheuz Principal Guest), and it comes across not

just as a useful concerto for a Cinderella instrument but also as a work of real creative impetus and ingenuity. The orchestra's principal piccolo Andrew Macleod is its persuasive advocate here, weaving his way with the orchestra around the first movement's embellishments and splinterings of John Ireland's hymn tune *My song is love unknown* and, in the companion *Scherzo*, negotiating the syncopations and dialogues with perky wit and lithe rhythmic definition.

The Stanhope concerto comes from the same June 2013 concerts that also featured **Copland's** *Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson* and *Appalachian Spring* which are coupled on the third disc, again conducted by Benjamin Northey. In evoking the quintessential American flavour of both works these performances are thoroughly beguiling. The Emily Dickinson songs are sung by the Manchester-born Australian soprano Emma Matthews, eloquently clear of diction but, much more than that, completely immersed in the character and dark emotional implications of the words and music, matched by the orchestra in terms of instrumental commentary reflecting the masterly, intuitive way in which Copland found the distinctive pulse and haunting power of Dickinson's poetry. *Appalachian Spring* is here performed not in the familiar full orchestration of 1945 but in the original scoring of the suite for 13 instruments. This equates to the size of the ensemble used for the production of the Martha Graham ballet in 1944, so it has its own credentials that are brilliantly underlined by this astute performance. Excitement and accuracy of the rhythmic cut and thrust go hand in hand with the heady wide-open-prairie languour that Copland enshrined in this music. Far from losing anything through the economy of instrumental means, it seems to gain in clarity and intimacy, especially when played with such finesse of detail and phrasing, and with such innate feeling for atmosphere as it is here. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Brahms Pf Concs Nos 1 & 2
Ohlsson; Melbourne SO / Otaka
MSO Live/ABC Classics (P) 481 0409



Adès *Polaris* Stanhope Picc Conc
Macleod; MSO / Stenz, Northey
MSO Live/ABC Classics (P) 481 0862



Copland *Appalachian Spring*, etc
MSO / Northey
MSO Live/ABC Classics (P) 481 0863

Tchaikovsky

Piano Concerto No 1, Op 23^a.

The Tempest, Op 18^b

^aJoyce Yang *pf*

Odense Symphony Orchestra / Alexander Lazarev

Bridge (F) BRIDGE9410 (58' • DDD)

Recorded live, ^aDecember 2011; ^bNovember 2013



The Tempest and Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto: an odd coupling but,

hey, why not? Tchaikovsky's emotionally charged symphonic fantasy comes first. While admitting that the Odense Symphony is not the Berlin Phil (especially the string department), this is an accomplished and exciting performance. One might quibble about the prominence given to the repeated horn figure from 3'29" but not that accorded to the timps and bass drum while 'Prospero raises a great storm'. On the other hand, Neeme Järvi with the Detroit Symphony are better engineered in a more spacious acoustic, and Mikhail Pletnev with the Russian National Orchestra offer more vivid characterisation in 'Ariel' and the beguiling 'Ferdinand and Miranda' love music.

The Concerto, recorded at a concert nearly two years earlier (December 2011), is fine – the kind of live performance that one might listen to with pleasure on the radio while preparing a meal and not give a second thought to afterwards. You might wonder at the lack of intent in the opening pages and whether the sound is as crisp as it might be. It is efficiently conducted and Joyce Yang is a confident and poised soloist, introducing many small individual touches along the way and with clear and perceptive phrasing. Throughout, there is an occasional intrusive 'thunk' (maybe pedal action or podium enthusiasm). With the score in hand, orchestral detail is generalised: in the first movement one misses the definition of the muted string triplets from bar 270 *et seq* and the piano is overwhelmed in the passage 15 bars before the close. As I said, it's all OK – but no competition for Matsuev, Argerich and the many other great recordings available.

Jeremy Nicholas

Tempest – selected comparisons:

Russian Nat Orch, Pletnev (12/94[®]) (DG)

477 0532GTR3 or 477 8699GB7

Detroit SO, N Järvi (8/96) (CHAN) CHAN9454

Pf Conc No 1 – selected comparisons:

Argerich, BPO, Abbado (9/96) (DG)

449 816-2GH or 477 8124GB7

Matsuev, Mariinsky Orch, Gergiev

(4/14) (MARI) MAR0548

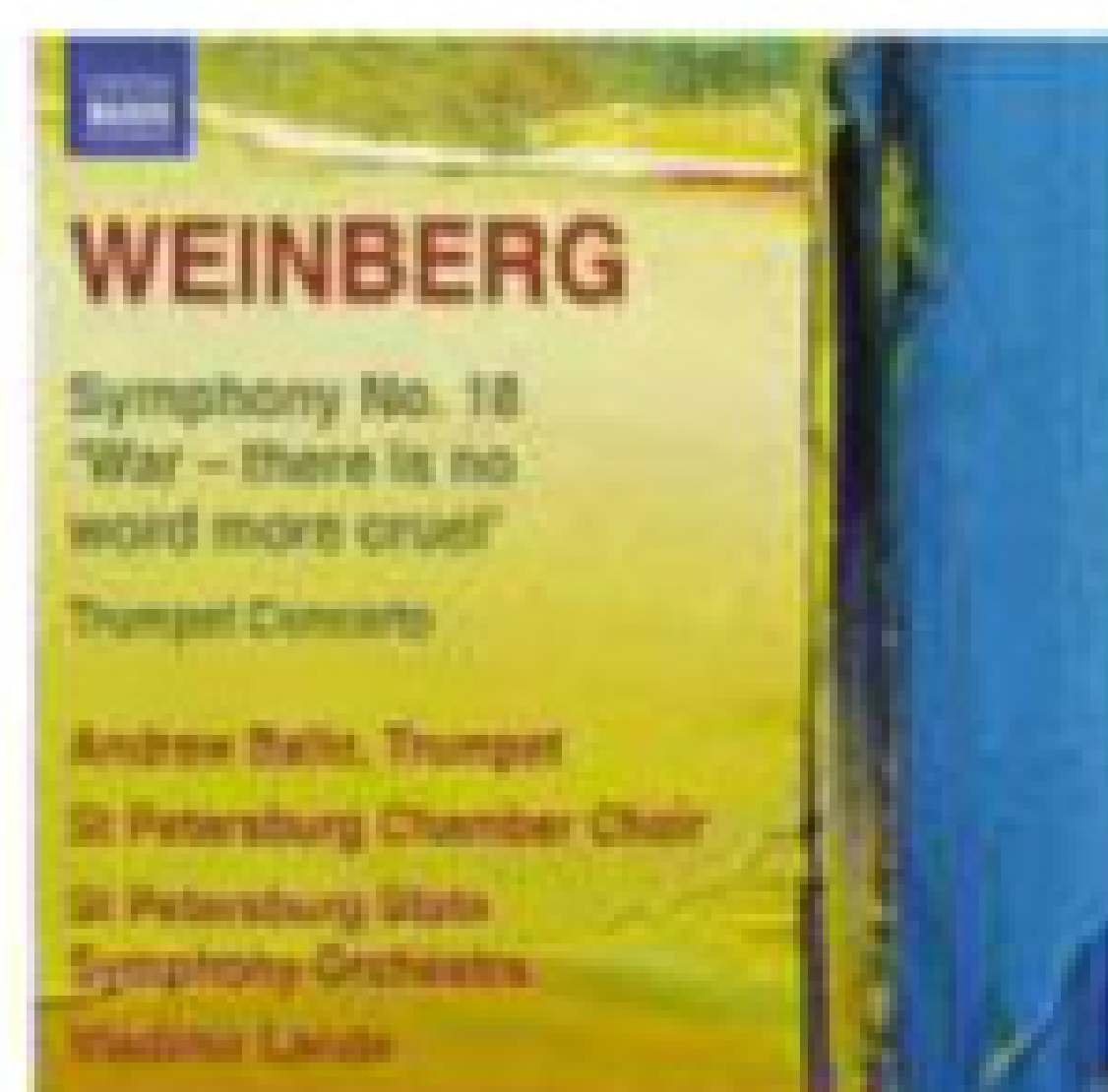
Weinberg

Symphony No 18, 'War – there is no word more cruel', Op 138^a. Trumpet Concerto, Op 94^b

^bAndrew Balio *tpt* St Petersburg ^aChamber Choir

and State Symphony Orchestra / Vladimir Lande

Naxos (B) 8 573190 (70' • DDD • T/t)



One of Weinberg's most Socialist Realist symphonies is here interestingly coupled

with the most experimental of his six concertos. Admittedly, to characterise Symphony No 18 thus is to underplay both the complexity of all such labels and the musical resourcefulness of the work itself. The fragmentation of the third of its four movements is a gripping experience, for example, and the pacifist message that runs through the entire symphony – centrepiece of Weinberg's early-1980s 'War Trilogy' – is fired by a deeply rooted personal sense of outrage. Paradoxically, pacifism was one of the sins Weinberg was accused of in the supposedly peace-loving pre-glasnost Soviet Union.

Vladimir Lande and the St Petersburg State Symphony with the St Petersburg Chamber Choir here maintain the standard of their previous Weinberg recordings, which is to say that the depth of sound and the dramatic intensity of their Soviet counterparts are rarely matched. For example, on the premiere recording, Vladimir Fedoseyev takes a much gentler view of the 'Little Berry' folksong that begins the third movement; and while both approaches are viable, Fedoseyev's is far more attuned to the function of the song in Weinberg's second opera, *The Madonna and the Soldier*, a work that in many respects stands as godfather to the Symphony. The effect should be, and is in Fedoseyev's hands, a shocking evocation of innocence besmirched.

It's a similar story with the Trumpet Concerto. This is a far more serious and altogether superior piece to the ubiquitous Arutunyan (not that that's saying much) and it has had half a dozen recordings. Much as Andrew Balio has to be admired for negotiating its demands on his agility with such aplomb, others – pre-eminently the work's dedicatee Timofey Dokshitser – show more dash and sustain more tension in the deceptively whimsical quotations Weinberg drops into his disturbingly ebbing finale. But the new disc offers a spectacular bargain alternative, decently recorded and annotated. **David Fanning**

Sym No 18 – comparative version:

USSR RSO, Fedoseyev (12/86) (OLYM) OCD589

Tpt Conc – Selected comparison:

Dokshitser, Moscow PO, Kondrashin (RUSS) RDCCD11006

'Characters'

Avison Concerto No 5 Corelli Concerti grossi, Op 6 – No 8; No 10 Rebel Les caractères de la danse Telemann Sinfonia spirituosissima, TWV44:1 Vivaldi Violin Concerto, RV230. Concerto for Two Violins and Cello, RV565

Karlsson Barock

Footprint (F) FRCD076 (71' • DDD)



'Characters' is the title of this collection of mostly concertos, implying that there

is no clever musicological thread here; each piece is of itself, and speaks of the personality of its creator. The brief, slightly quirky booklet-notes emphasise the point by tending to focus more on the man than the music.

So who are the characters here, or rather who are they as portrayed by harpsichordist Göran Karlsson and his Swedish band of string players? Well, there's Corelli, bright, vivid, even fiery at times; Vivaldi, fulsome, expressive and larger-than-life in two violin concertos, one solo and one double; Charles Avison, briskly and bluffly turning Scarlatti sonatas to good orchestral account; Telemann, eloquent and self-confident; and there's Jean-Féry Rebel, whose short ballet collage *Les caractères de la danse* has maybe never sounded more enthusiastically choreographic, more readily evocative of one of Louis XV Paris's virtuoso *danseuses* executing a speed-tour of differing styles, than here.

Karlsson Barock are a vigorous-spirited outfit who sound happy at their work. Though at times they can lack the sweet tone or ensemble precision of some period orchestras, they also stop short of the aggressive, even percussive style of some others. Not that they don't have their moments in both directions (mostly towards the latter), but what comes over most strongly here is their open-hearted and infectious brightness. Karlsson has some ear-catching ideas of his own too: an unusually placed accent here or a skilfully handled transition there (such as the bold opening of Corelli's 'Christmas' Concerto or the simple but satisfying solution to the often jarring chord progression at the end of the fugue in Vivaldi's RV565 – tr 32, 2'34") ensure that his own character has a place alongside those of the composers in the overall success of this disc. Nice to meet you sir!

Lindsay Kemp

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

WORLD CUP CLASSICS

Guy Rickards listens to a selection of discs from tournament host Brazil and some of its near South American neighbours



Vocal acrobatics: Brazilian tenor Luciano Botelho captures the 'sounds of Brazil and Argentina'

This month, the World Cup completes its quadrennial circuit, hosted by the country that has won it more often than any other, Brazil. (England's early demise is at least consistent; last time Brazil were hosts, in 1950, England were dumped out in the opening stages by the USA and Spain!) When first staged, in Uruguay in 1930, Latin American classical music was defined largely by two men: the Brazilian Villa-Lobos and Paraguayan guitar virtuoso Barrios. True, some of Mexican Carlos Chávez's scores had made it across the Atlantic but European composers seeking to emulate a Latin American sound and who had not – as Milhaud had – visited the continent, followed Villa-Lobos, as can be heard clearly in the finale of **Respighi's** *Brazilian Impressions* (1927-28). This engaging triptych is vividly played by the Liège Philharmonic under John Neschling, audibly relishing the felicities of Respighi's varied textures. The coupling is Respighi's complete ballet *La boutique fantasque* (1918) in a vibrant and entertaining account.

Villa-Lobos's legacy is felt less directly in three early works by **Miguel Kertsman** (b1965) played by the Linz Bruckner Orchestra under Dennis Russell Davies. Kertsman shares with his older compatriot an appealingly intuitive approach to composition. The freedom in his instrumental writing, heard most obviously in the Chamber Symphony No 1, *Acorda!* ('Wake Up!'; 1995-96), derives from his interest in jazz and crossover musics

but all three evince the wide range of his sympathies, the *Sinfonia concertante Brasileira* (1989) most notably of big band jazz, while Villa-Lobos shows up in the percussion-writing throughout and in the heartfelt melodism of *Amazônia's* central section. This early symphonic poem (1987) shows the composer finding his voice, yet he integrates his ideas convincingly. Fine as the performances are, I cannot help thinking a South American orchestra would have played with greater pizzazz.

A different side of Brazilian music is caught in Viktoria Mullova's **Stradivarius in Rio**, a collection of 13 popular songs arranged for violin, guitar (Carioca Freitas), cello (Matthew Barley) and percussion (Paul Clarvis and Luis Guello). The instrumental sound feels like a super-suave mariachi band but their slickness serves the music well, whether the four songs by Antonio (Tom) Jobim, Zequinha de Abreu's *Tico-Tico*, Pixinguinha's gorgeous *Rosa* or Vogeler's *Linda Flor*. The other items are equally appealing; neatly recorded, too.

Brazilian tenor Luciano Botelho's recital couples **Sounds of Brazil and Argentina**, opening with Guastavino's *Cuatro Canciones Argentinas*, a typically delightful set full of his trademark Latin rhythms, and Ginastera's even finer *Cinco Canciones populares Argentinas*, more angular in melody and harmonically more adventurous. The remainder are Brazilian: Mignone's *Sete Liricas*, which have many fine moments; Mozart Camargo

Guarnieri's beautifully balanced *Five Poems of Alice*; and *Three Poems from Vinicius de Moraes* by João Guilherme Ripper, weighty mini-cantatas by comparison and the longest tracks by a distance. Botelho copes admirably with some challenging vocal writing and the piano accompaniments are rendered wonderfully well by Brighton-born Elizabeth Marcus, never overwhelming the tenor.

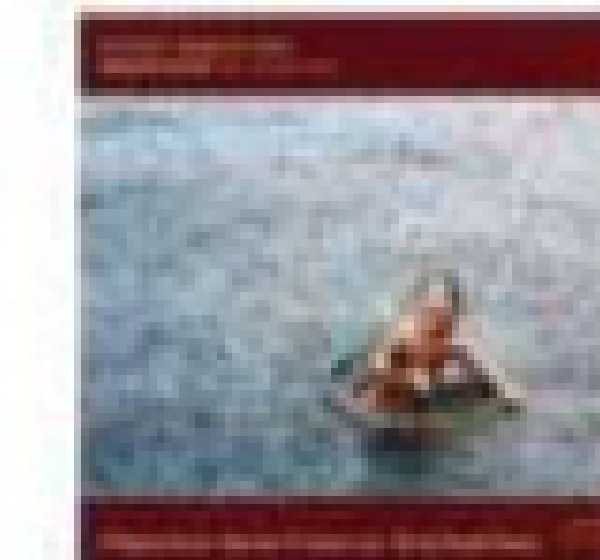
Argentina is the home of Tango Nuevo with Piazzolla its king; times move on, however, and Marcelo Nisinman has staked a claim as his successor. His skill on the bandoneón is manifest on **Nuevo Tango Nuevo** (Newer Tango, I suppose), where he is the nimble-fingered soloist in his own *Dark Blue Tango* – an at times aggressive, punchy score – and Julio Viera's subtler, more nuanced *Tangos de medianoche* ('Midnight tangos'). This vibrantly played disc is completed by *Marginal*, a chamber orchestral triptych by Pablo Ortiz which approaches tango from the direction of the New Simplicity. The result is rather engaging.

Two Mexican composers appear on a stirringly played disc, with Jorge Federico Osorio performing **Chávez's** Rachmaninovian Piano Concerto plus the brief, impressionistic *Meditación*, and **Moncayo's** *Muros verdes* ('Green Walls'; 1951). Exhilarating as the 37-minute concerto is, the pithy *Muros verdes* and **Samuel Zyman's** fine *Variations on an Original Theme* (2007) impress the most. Osorio is a persuasive exponent and Cedille's recording, while it will win no silverware, is clear and vivid. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



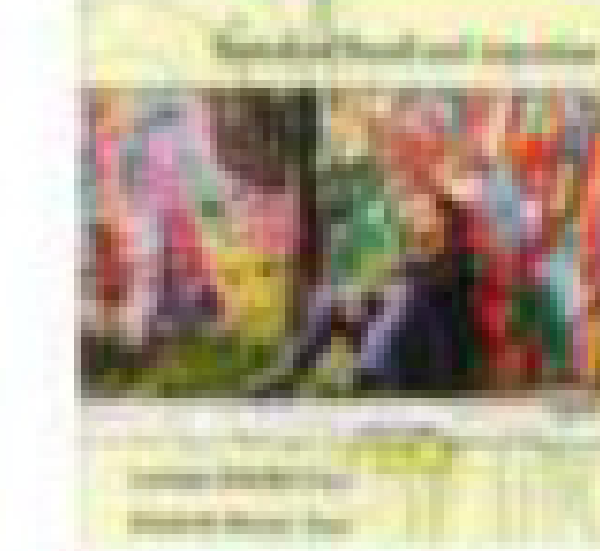
Respighi *Brazilian Impressions*
Liège PO / Neschling
BIS (P) BIS2050



Kertsman *Amazônia, etc*
Bruckner Orch, Linz / DR Davies
Gramola (P) 98959



Various Cpsrs *Stradivarius in Rio*
Mullova, Barley et al
Onyx (M) ONYX4130



Various Cpsrs *Sounds of Brazil and Argentina*
Botelho, Marcus
Music & Media (P) MMC 108



Nisinman et al *Nuevo Tango Nuevo*
Nisinman; Orch Musique des Lumières
Oehms (P) OC895



Chávez, Moncayo, Zyman *Orch Wks*
Osorio; Mexican Nat SO / Prieto
Cedille (P) CRD90000 140

Prokofiev's First Violin Sonata

Alina Ibragimova and Steven Osborne join *Caroline Gill* to probe the emotional depths of this brutal, often bleak though also 'beautiful' work – one that is a true duo sonata

When I beetle along to the Richoux restaurant on Piccadilly, I'm ready: I know where Prokofiev's harmonic points of interest are; I know where he hangs the melodic and harmonic progress on a peg in a musical hiatus in B minor (sticking out of an overall texture of F minor) to suspend the musical rhetoric in mid-air until he's ready to regroup his thoughts in a different direction; and I think I know what Prokofiev is getting at in the four-and-a-half-bar phrases of repeated falling fifths. The piece in question is his First Violin Sonata, and I'm meeting with Alina Ibragimova and Steven Osborne to discuss it. Their recording of Prokofiev's music for violin and piano is released by Hyperion in August, after a series of recitals last year, and they are performing the piece at Wigmore Hall the day after we meet.

But it turns out they aren't really up for that kind of conversation. Their ideas are much bigger. This is a potent reminder of how musicians of their quality are beyond paper-based analysis: however much I may have studied the notes themselves, they are on a different plane.

The recording was originally planned several years ago as a project between Osborne and Lisa Batiashvili, but in Osborne's words, it got 'complicated', put off, and then Osborne was ill for the recording date. 'The number for

'It always feels like a struggle. Even in the gentler parts, there's a sense that the struggle is never far away' – Alina Ibragimova

the CD is massively out of the sequence for where it is in the catalogue!' he laughs.

There's no doubt, though, that the artistic collaboration between Osborne and Ibragimova has provided both with a profound sense of artistic satisfaction. A superior whole has been created from the sum of two already great parts, and this has come from them working their way into the same emotional space.

Prokofiev's First Violin Sonata (he wrote two, although the First was actually written after the Second, over the course of the entirety of the Second World War) is a true duo sonata – written for the overarching ego of David Oistrakh, but



Ibragimova and Osborne with their producer Andrew Keener (centre)

nevertheless honouring Prokofiev's own pianistic integrity in the piano part. There is a point in the last movement where Prokofiev said he wanted the audience to think the pianist had gone mad, and as the savagery and underlying hopelessness of this piece are what drives and identifies it, this seems like a good place to start our discussion. It is the point at which everything that Prokofiev has held in delicate balance all the way through the piece completely disintegrates: the tragic resolution of the sense that any gentleness, sweetness or sentimentality is never going to last, and will be broken and spoilt at some point by its menacing undercurrent of depression.

'It always feels like a struggle, somehow,' says Ibragimova. 'Even in the gentler parts, there's a sense that the struggle is never far away.' But she is at pains to qualify that by saying that at no point does the music in this sonata ever become truly ugly. She is more inclined to describe the dejected creepiness as having fairy-tale aspects, rather than tipping into the grotesque in the way that, for instance, Shostakovich can when he is in a similarly sombre artistic place. 'The one consoling thing about it', she says firmly, 'is that it's always beautiful.'

'For me, it feels particularly direct,' adds Osborne. 'Is there any other Prokofiev that has this much viscosity?'



The historical view

David Oistrakh

Recalling the first time Prokofiev played the score through to him (1946)

'One had the feeling of being present at a very great and significant event. Nothing written for the violin in many decades – anywhere in the world – could equal this piece in beauty and depth.'

Harlow Robinson

Sergey Prokofiev: A Biography (Northeastern University Press, 2002)

'In this masterpiece, the mischief and high spirits so typical of Prokofiev's music have been distilled, refined and transcended. Wisdom replaces wisecracks.'

Sergey Prokofiev

Referring to his First Violin Sonata in a letter to his old friend Myaskovsky (June 12, 1943)

'It will be interesting to see how you will deal with the sonorities of a violin sonata: I began one a long time ago already, but cannot seem to figure out how to continue – it's hard.'

'No,' says Ibragimova. 'I find it very different, actually, from any other Prokofiev I know.'

Perhaps that's because of the abrasive collaboration between Prokofiev and Oistrakh? They certainly talked extensively over the eight years that Prokofiev took to write it. Osborne laughs at this: 'Oistrakh was a strong personality, so it's hard to imagine Prokofiev saying, "No, don't do it like that, do it like this," and Oistrakh just saying, "Oh, OK," if he disagrees.'

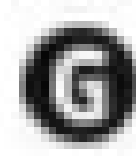
Looking at the hugely difficult piano part, though, it's clear that Prokofiev was writing for himself. 'Bits are difficult,' admits Osborne, 'but not a lot of it. It's often tricky to work out what he's getting at – how you get round certain corners, what the shape of it is.' When I ask him whether he means technically or harmonically, he says: 'Musically.' The bigger picture again.

Osborne continues: 'Oistrakh, for instance, in a number of those places, would basically just slow down and then start again, it seems to me. I feel Prokofiev is sometimes slightly on the outside of his music, emotionally – but this was written when it was a paranoid time for artists. For me that's the emotion here: he came back to Russia with the promise that everything would be great for him, and he found that it was absolute hell.'

Osborne and Ibragimova are in complete agreement that this is the driving force behind a piece that Osborne describes as a 'morbidly broken thing'. Through the deep depression of the opening movement, the brutality of the second and the serenity (and tinges of other emotions) of the third, it ends up, Osborne says, 'tipping into the abyss. For a listener, it's surprising to find yourself at this cataclysmic section at the end – how have we got here?'

It's certainly true that one of the strongest elements in this piece is the way that Prokofiev balances the different characters of each movement. For example, the third – an oasis of quietude with almost fairground elements to it – would offer much of the same musical experience to the listener even if it was a free-standing work. But the fact that it comes after music that is so depressed and brutal raises the question of how and why such soulfulness and peace comes out at that particular point. 'Is it a kind of retreat?' suggests Osborne. 'Is it closing your eyes and pretending something's not there, or is it a transformation?'

In the final movement, though, aren't we back to the difficulty of the first two movements? 'I think this one is much more outward, actually,' says Ibragimova. Osborne adds: 'I think that when you really struggle with something and you get all the negative emotion out, it frees you to be able to find something more joyous.' I mention that I don't find this last movement at all positive. By the time you reach the end, the starkest of the opening ideas – which Prokofiev called 'wind whistling through a graveyard' – has returned, leaving the listener in no doubt about the bleakness of the future. Osborne agrees that it's certainly not polite, and that there is 'a strong edge of aggression to it'. 'The theme does come back, yes,' concurs Ibragimova. 'It's like the First Concerto in that way.'

I wonder, after all this, what they hope an audience's overriding impression of the piece will be. 'You get so focused on every note of it that you can't really think about that,' ventures Ibragimova, after some thought. Adds Osborne: 'You can't control it. People hear different things in what you're doing and you just have to hope that it's somehow strong enough in the conception that the different viewpoints of the audience are satisfied.' 

► Read Gramophone's review on page 28

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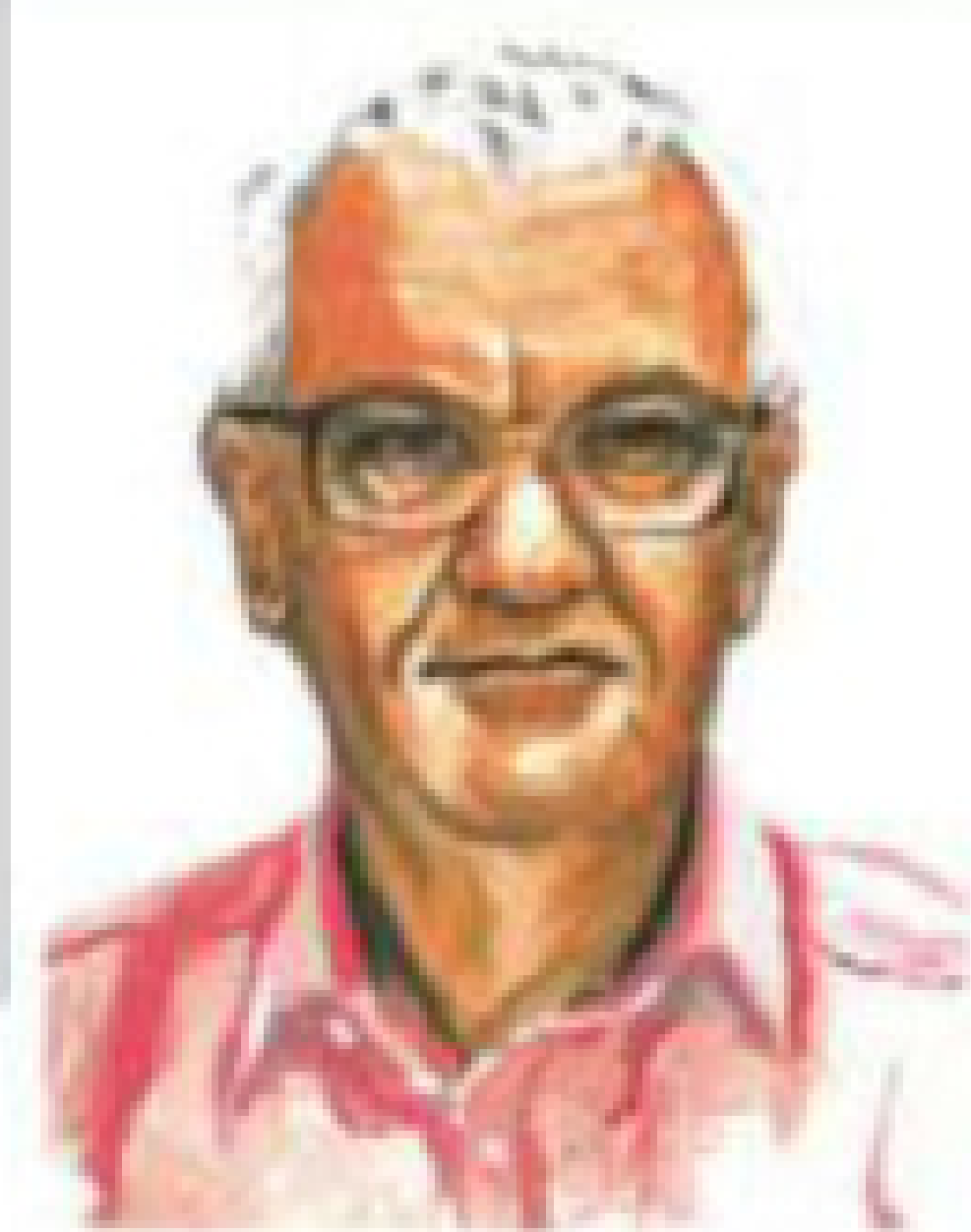
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Chamber



Arnold Whittall reviews assorted chamber works by Peter Eötvös:

'It is music about absence, and offers a kind of resonant, steadily unfolding ritual that slows the passage of time' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 51**



Duncan Druce on Shostakovich and Ravel from Prague:

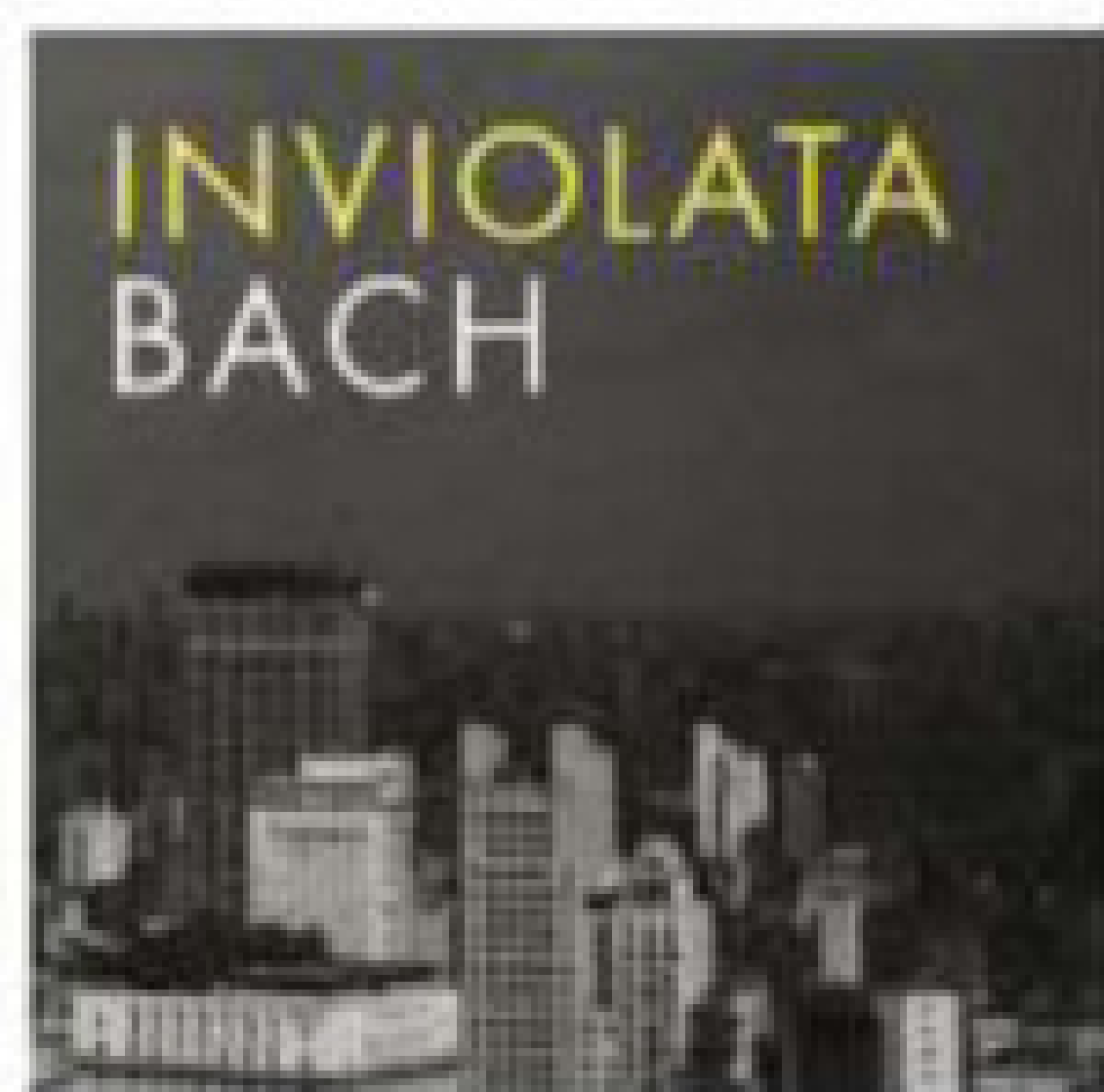
'From the opening, the Smetana Trio's players know just what to do for maximum effect' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 56**

JS Bach

Viola da gamba Sonatas, BWV1027-1029

Inviolata

Gateway Music © 5707471 030004 (76' • DDD)



Bach's 'Gamba Sonatas' on viola and accordion? Yes, but given that sometimes the surviving instrumentation of many Bach pieces can seem almost a matter of accident, who is to say what the 'correct' sound for any of them should be? All three of these superb sonatas for viola da gamba and obbligato harpsichord were originally scored for something else, yet in this high-stakes musical chairs game it is the gamba players who have been the lucky ones to find themselves in possession when the music stopped. You can't blame players of other instruments for eyeing them up.

Asbjørn Nørgaard and Andreas Borregaard, who together make up the duo Inviolata, play the music straight, with feeling, sensitivity and no tricks or particularly noticeable rewrites (the viola plays the gamba part and the accordion easily deals with the harpsichord's two-part role). In music as masterfully constructed as this, that's good news already. Even better is that fast movements are full of life and rhythmic impulse, slow movements display all their aching, unearthly beauty and Bach's timeless counterpoint is articulated in all its gladsome detail. After that there is really not much more to be said, other than that the delicate sound world created by the accordion, this tiny, gently breathing organ, seems in no way inappropriate to Bach's music – indeed, probably less so than a modern piano.

I've had this disc playing on a loop in my car for a fortnight now, and haven't come close to tiring of it yet. **Lindsay Kemp**

JS Bach

Six Trio Sonatas, BWV525-530

Tempesta di Mare

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0803 (73' • DDD)



That Bach himself routinely arranged his own works and those of others

licenses enterprising modern performers to do likewise. Tempesta di Mare's offering of his Trio Sonatas gives plenty of food for thought. The scoring chosen for No 6 (including recorder and violin), along with its key, puts one in mind of the Fourth *Brandenburg Concerto*, for example. Violins and recorder are entrusted with most melodic parts in the set, with the exception of No 4, which is rendered as a duo for lute and harpsichord. The resulting music-box quality is reinforced by metronomic regularity of pulse and a close-sounding recording. This is slightly disconcerting in the outer movements; but in the marvellous slow movement, a contrapuntal kaleidoscope of clockwork precision, it pays dividends beyond what one might expect.

The most successful of these arrangements shed unexpected light on the originals, then, while others translate them into another medium effectively but more neutrally (as in Nos 2 and 5). The performances are highly sympathetic, though the odd reservation obtrudes: the intonation of the recorder isn't always as true as one might wish (especially in No 5) and the violas da gamba sometimes lack the fluid resonance that keeps a continuo section light on its feet, with tempi seeming a touch slow as a result. But it's an enjoyable and instructive set, for all that, the slow movement of No 4 being worth the price of admission on its own.

Fabrice Fitch

Bartók

'Chamber Works for Violin, Vol 3'

Contrasts, Sz111^a. Forty-four Duos, Sz98^b.

Sonatina, Sz55 (transcr Gertler)^c

James Ehnes *vn* with ^a**Michael Collins** *cl*

^b**Amy Schwartz Moretti** *vn* ^c**Andrew Armstrong** *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10820 (69' • DDD)



Annotator Paul Griffiths imaginatively suggests that rather than calling his

'clarinet trio' *Contrasts*, Bartók might have opted for the more apt 'Confluences', a word that more accurately reflects the music's conversational quality. The point strikes home with particular force in this witty, slimline and, yes, profoundly conversational performance, agility being a constant virtue and with never a hint of one player stealing the limelight from another. The nocturnal shimmering of the middle movement, 'Relaxation', is conveyed with cut-glass precision, and the closing moments of the 'Fast Dance' last movement are brilliant in the extreme. Rather than aping a rustic village band, Ehnes, Collins and Armstrong opt for a more astringently Stravinskian approach, save for the gentle bossa nova-style central section that sets in around the two-minute mark.

André Gertler's violin arrangement of the folk-infused piano Sonatina is a treated to a performance that is marginally sweeter than Gertler's own (Supraphon, good though that is); but for a sequence that reflects just how much musical sustenance Bartók absorbed from folk out in the fields, you won't do better than his 44 Duos for violins of 1931, teaching material that can instruct the listener as much it instructs the players. The range of musics on offer here is very wide: Hungarian, Slovakian, Serbian, Romanian, Transylvanian, Walachian, Ruthenian and Arabic. Bartók's harmonisations, with their sudden flashes of beauty or meaningful dissonances, help bring out the flavours of each folk style much as a subtle range of spices might enhance the substance of a dish. Try the 'Walachian Song' (tr 13), 'Mosquito Dance' (tr 28), 'Sorrow' (tr 34, especially beautiful), 'Dance from Máramos' (tr 38), 'Prelude and Canon' (tr 44) or the gutsy 'Arabian Song' (tr 49).

The trick in performing all these pieces well is one of balance, making sure that the duetting element is respected down to even the tiniest detail. James Ehnes and Amy Schwartz Moretti are fully the equal of even their most illustrious rivals, their playing varied and characterful enough to make listening to any of the four books of Duos at a single sitting a real pleasure. A lovely programme. **Rob Cowan**

Beethoven

'Complete String Quartets, Vol 3'

String Quartets – No 4, Op 18 No 4;

No 7, Op 59 No 1. Grosse Fuge, Op 133

Cremona Quartet

Audite (F)  AUDITE92 682 (79' • DDD/DSD)



I got my first taste of the Quartetto di Cremona in a survey of Beethoven chamber music last summer. Now they've reached Vol 3 of the quartets and the qualities that were apparent then are just as abundant here. I particularly like the way they combine early, middle and late Beethoven: it sets up fascinating tensions and counterpoints.

Their opening of the *Grosse Fuge* is a reminder that this is one of the greatest of all gauntlet-throwing-down gestures in music. It's immensely ballsy playing, sweaty, almost anarchic in the sense of it almost coming apart at the seams in the *Allegro* proper. This is emphasised by Audite's immediate recording (The Lindsays sound deliberate by comparison). Many others are more polished – not least the Takács, while the Talich have a wonderful clarity – but this is a thrilling ride, even if timbre suffers at times.

The extraordinary opening of Op 59 No 1 needs, to my mind, to begin almost mid-stream: the Takács are spot-on, and their mix of elegance, energy and precision is very alluring. The Quartetto di Cremona are that bit more impatient: it's no surprise that this spacious movement is highly emotive, tremulous even. The Artemis tread a convincing middle ground, while the Takács, who seem almost frozen with grief at the outset, create one of the most intense readings of all. The Cremona's finale, though, is wonderfully energetic, the players ripping into the accents with real glee.

If you're a fan of the recent Belcea account of Op 18 No 4, chances are you won't much like this. The pent-up emotion that characterises that account has no place here, particularly in the sliding, slewing Minuet, which is energetic and humorous;

the very focused finale of the Belcea strikes me as a little po-faced; the Hagen, with a not dissimilar approach, find more light and shade; but the Cremona's appeal lies in their reactivity and playfulness.

Performances of great personality, then; not benchmarks but an exciting addition to the shelves nonetheless. **Harriet Smith**

Stg Qt No 4 – selected comparisons:

Hagen Qt (5/00) (DG)  459 611-2GH

Belcea Qt (1/13) (ZZT) ZYT315 or ZYT344

Stg Qt No 7 – selected comparisons:

Takács Qt (7/02) (DECC) 470 847-2DH2

Artemis Qt (VIRG) 545738-2 or 070858-2

Grosse Fuge – selected comparisons:

Lindsay Qt (9/01) (ASV) CDDCA1117

Takács Qt (5/05) (DECC) 470 849-2DH3

Talich Qt (LDV) LDV278 or LDV1217

Beethoven

String Trio, Op 3. Serenade, Op 8

Trio Zimmermann

BIS (F)  BIS2087 (68' • DDD/DSD)



The acknowledged masterpieces among Beethoven's string trios are the three

that form Op 9. Trio Zimmermann have already recorded those with aplomb (3/12), and I share Nalen Anthoni's enthusiasm for that disc. Now comes their follow-up and it's every bit as absorbing. These earlier pieces have tended to be relatively under-appreciated; true, they may not be the polished masterpieces of the mature composer but they are full of vim and vigour, and unmistakably Beethovenian.

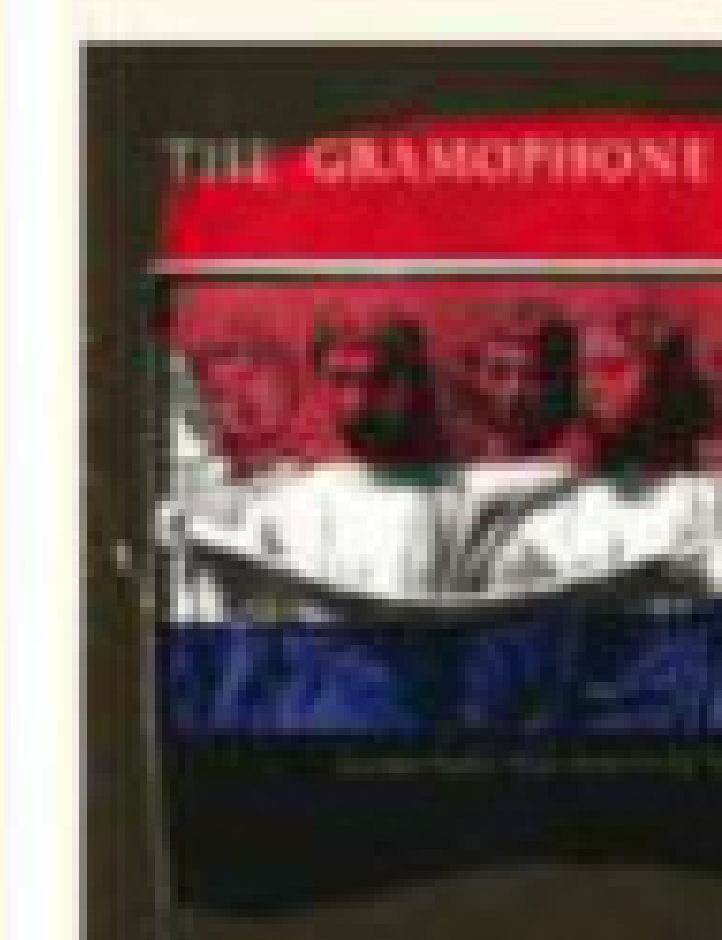
Trio Zimmermann are big on heart and technique but low on ego, which makes for superbly natural-sounding performances. Something as simple as the *Andante* of the Op 3 Trio becomes a great conversation piece in their hands, sounding even more engaged than in the Leopold's. The accents that propel the Minuet are beautifully managed, too, as is the strikingly textured Trio section, in which sustained writing for the lower two instruments forms a backdrop for stratospheric violin acrobatics, managed by Frank Peter Zimmermann even more sweetly than Isabelle van Keulen of the Leopold.

It's no accident that Op 8 is described as a Serenade, and its numerous folk elements are vividly brought to life. Trio Zimmermann are not afraid to play virtually without vibrato at the outset of the minor-key *Adagio*, to telling effect, making the contrast with the faster movements all the more marked: there's an oomph to the accents in the opening Marcia and in the

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Bartók's Contrasts

Three recordings that came before James Ehnes – and how Gramophone rated them



JUNE 1953

Bartók Contrasts

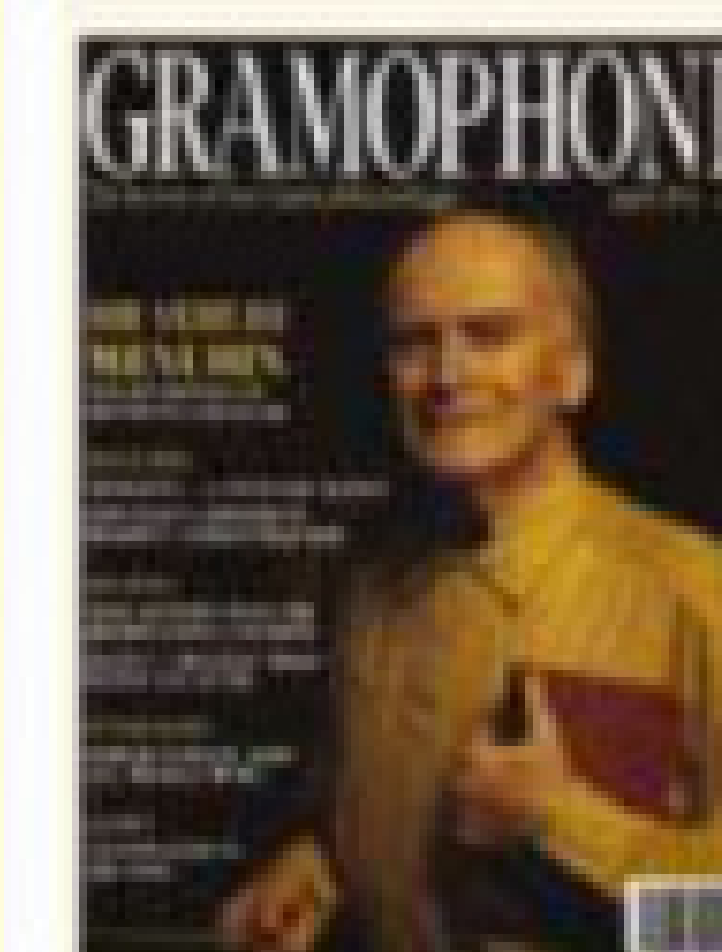
Georgina Dobrée *cl*

Malcolm Latchem *vn*

Gordon Watson *pf*

Argo  ATM1002 (10in • 27s 3½d)

Contrasts was written in 1938 for performance by the composer himself and his friends Szigeti and Benny Goodman (who recorded it for Columbia). The trio of young players in this recording tackle the difficulties of the work with zest, and the latter two movements are well played: in the first movement, however, there is some sense of strain, and the performance is insufficiently relaxed to capture the carefree gaiety Bartók intended. *Lionel Salter*



APRIL 1991

Bartók Contrasts

Michael Collins *cl*

Krysia Osostowicz *vn*

Susan Tones *pf*

Hyperion (F)  CDA66415 (72' • DDD)

Some may find Michael Collins's contribution almost too cultured, but the historic Goodman/Szigeti/Bartók on CBS is by no means without fault, and the Hyperion recording is better balanced than that of Delos/Pinnacle for the excellent American musicians in Chamber Music Northwest. All in all an outstandingly successful and enjoyable issue.

David Fanning



JUNE 2006

Bartók Contrasts

Michel Portal *cl*

Laurent Korcia *vn*

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*

Naïve (F)  V4991 (114' • DDD)

The *Contrasts* are for the most part excellently played, though Korcia's last-movement cadenza is a bit too impulsive and rough-edged for comfort (if comfort is what you're after). Michel Portal has a creamy, mellifluous tone that reminds me of the original soloist, Benny Goodman, whose own playing wasn't anywhere near as agile. Jean-Efflam Bavouzet is a highly capable pianist, the performance of *Contrasts* somewhat freer than another fine new version by violinist Annar Follesø, who is marginally more reserved than Korcia, with clarinetist Björn Nyman and pianist Christian Ihle Hadland in obvious accord.

Rob Cowan

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more extrovert movements they're a degree more earthy than the Leopold, notably in the cross-rhythms of the Minuet and the *sf* accents of the finale. Add to that BIS's exemplary recording and you have a winner of a disc. **Harriet Smith**

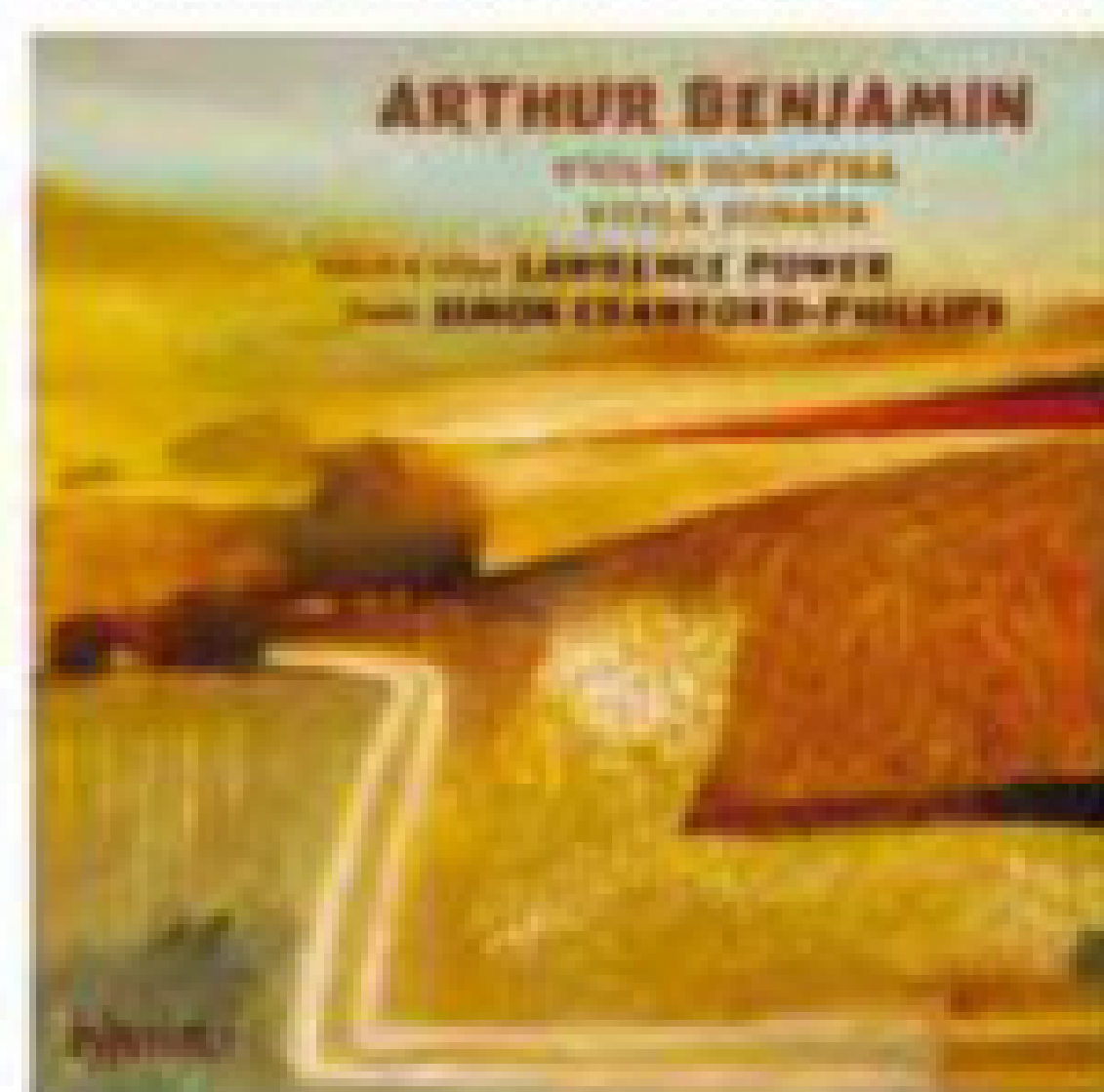
Selected comparison:

Leopold Stg Trio (1/99⁸) (HYPE) CDD22069

A Benjamin

Violin Sonatina. Three Pieces. A Tune and Variations for Little People. Le tombeau de Ravel. Viola Sonata. From San Domingo. Jamaican Rumba

Lawrence Power *vn/va* **Simon Crawford-Phillips** *pf*
Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67969 (66' • DDD)



How encouraging it is to see Arthur Benjamin's growing representation on disc.

As I hope I made clear in my welcome to those admirable orchestral discs from Lyrita (6/07) and Dutton (3/12), this Sydney-born figure deserves to be remembered for far more than just that light-music gem, *Jamaican Rumba*.

Actually, one of the items on that Dutton release, namely the impressive *Elegy, Waltz and Toccata*, forms the centrepiece of this stylish new anthology but in its original guise as the Viola Sonata that Benjamin wrote for – and performed with – the great William Primrose. It really is a most compelling achievement, evincing a dazzling technical and expressive flair, richness of invention and knotty rigour fully justifying the late Calum MacDonald's astute assessment of it as 'one of the finest viola sonatas of the 20th century'. Hugely impressive, too, is *Le tombeau de Ravel*, an intoxicating set of six linked *valse-caprices* from 1957 originally written for clarinet and piano, while the early Violin Sonatina and Three Pieces for violin and piano already reveal a natural born and immensely personable talent. The delightfully cheeky miniature *From San Domingo* transports us to the Caribbean and contains at least one ear-tickling innovation (I won't spoil the surprise). And, yes, our old friend *Jamaican Rumba* is here too – the last item on the programme and given in an arrangement which Primrose made in 1954 of the violin-and-piano version that Benjamin had dedicated to Jascha Heifetz.

Although Lawrence Power is not quite as characterful or fine-grained a fiddler as he is a viola player, there's precious little with which to take issue about his alert and sensitive advocacy. His interpretation of the tremendous Viola Sonata is truly

magnificent, and he receives impeccable support throughout from Simon Crawford-Phillips. Excellent recording and presentation, too. **Andrew Achenbach**

Birtwistle

'Chamber Music'

Three Setting of Lorine Niedecker^a.

Nine Settings of Lorine Niedecker^a. Piano Trio^b.

Bogenstrich: Meditations on a Poem of Rilke^c

^a**Amy Freston** *sop* ^c**Roderick Williams** *bar* ^b**Lisa**

Batiashvili *vn* ^{abc}**Adrian Brendel** *vc* ^{bc}**Till Fellner** *pf*

ECM New Series Ⓢ 476 5050 (65' • DDD • T)



After decades of favouring winds and percussion in his ensemble pieces,

Birtwistle turned his attention in the course of the 1990s to string-writing, and to the piano, and to collections of songs. If you enjoy the 'Fantasias and Friezes' for string quartet that punctuate his settings of Paul Celan in *Pulse Shadows*, or the quartet sequence *The Tree of Strings*, let me recommend an exploration of his Piano Trio of 2011, together with the collection of songs recorded here and especially the cycle *Bogenstrich*. Whatever the medium and the accretions of tradition you might accept a composer of Birtwistle's independence of mind to react against – in composing a piano trio, for example – he finds something fresh to say and an accommodation for his intensely personal vision of the world.

I know Brendel *père* admires him hugely: so who would pass up an invitation to write a piece for cellist Adrian plus the excellent pianist Till Fellner to honour Alfred's 75th birthday? That was in 2006 and the result was a quite un-Mendelssohnian six-minute *Lied ohne Worte*. The following year Birtwistle composed *Variationen*, of similar dimensions, again for Brendel and Fellner; later yet another movement appeared (quick – *Wie eine Fuge*), to make three connected cello and piano pieces which were eventually book-ended by settings of Rilke's 'Liebes-Lied', at the beginning for baritone and piano and at the close for baritone and cello. And everything of the same six-minute duration, give or take a second or two, as if this had been a 'given'. *Bogenstrich* is the title of this half-hour of music, borrowed from Rilke's image of a bow stroke drawing a single voice from two strings. It's a cycle which continues to draw me back.

The settings of Lorine Niedecker (1903-70), for soprano and cello, began as a bouquet of three for Elliott Carter, and

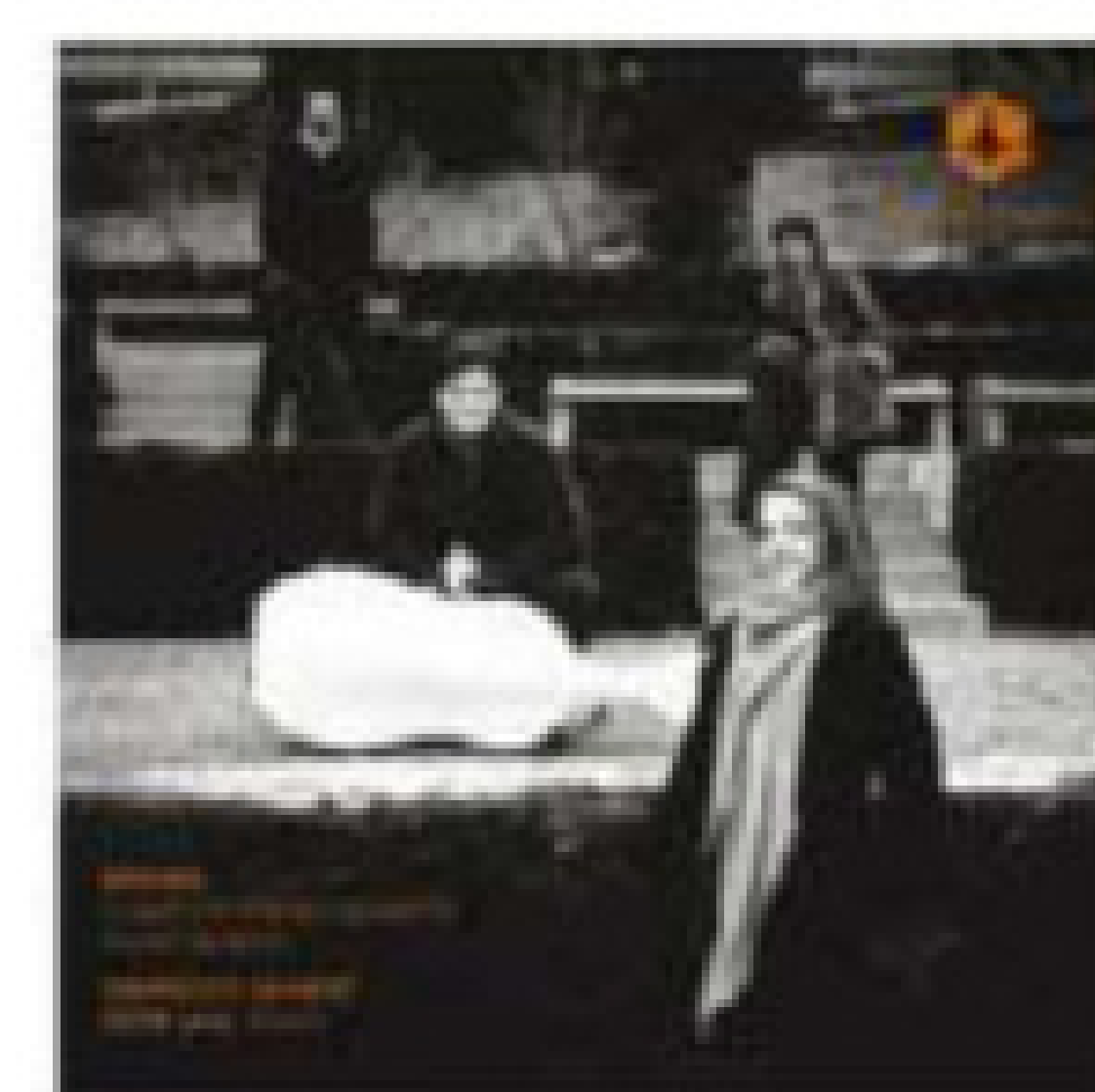
I wouldn't be surprised if it was Carter who introduced this concise and modernist poet to Birtwistle. Whenever I was in New York with a brief to see him about something we ended up talking about poems and poets he admired, I as a willing listener. There are a dozen of hers here to which Birtwistle responds with great refinement of sound and procedure. Amy Freston is good but you need to follow the words with the booklet since she doesn't articulate much with lips, teeth and tongue. Roderick Williams is very fine in *Bogenstrich* and the three instrumentalists, quite closely recorded, are in a class any composer would die for. **Stephen Plaistow**

Brahms

Three String Quartets. Piano Quintet, Op 34^a

^a**Peter Laul** *pf* **Gringolts Quartet**

Orchid Ⓢ ② ORC10042 (140' • DDD)



The Gringolts Quartet is a remarkable group. These highly accomplished players

achieve a near-perfect blend of sound, effortless precision and unanimity of style. The slow movements of the quartets are notable for their beautiful sonorities and for a flexibility that allows changes of mood to be brought out without disturbing the music's natural flow. The group's virtuoso brilliance can be heard at the end of the A minor Quartet, Op 51 No 2, and in the first movement of the one in C minor, Op 51 No 1. However, in this last case, though it's an extraordinary achievement to play such a rhythmically complex piece so fast, I find the result to be not merely agitated but moving towards frenzy. And even in those lovely slow movements, others have projected Brahms's melodies with greater eloquence, for instance the Alban Berg Quartet. The performances do include several high points. I'll single out the last two movements of the B flat Quartet, Op 67: the *Agitato* third movement notable for the magnificent viola-playing of Silvia Simionescu, the finale exceptionally well characterised, with each variation distinguished by its own tonal quality.

The Piano Quintet similarly mixes outstanding moments with less successful ones. In the *Scherzo*, the sinister quiet passages create a powerful feeling of suspense but the climaxes are oddly disappointing. Certainly Peter Serkin, playing with the Guarneri Quartet, creates a more powerful effect here, and in the preceding *Andante* he helps to create a soft,



Something fresh to say: Lisa Batiashvili (violin) and Adrian Brendel (cello) record Birtwistle's 'intensely personal' Piano Trio

meditative atmosphere that's missing on the new recording. It's a somewhat frustrating issue and not a first recommendation, but the performances are often truly enlightening. **Duncan Druce**

Stg Qts – selected comparison:

Alban Berg Qt (2/94) (EMI) 754829-2

Pf Qnt – selected comparison:

P Serkin, Guarneri Qt (5/99) (PHIL) 446 710-2PH

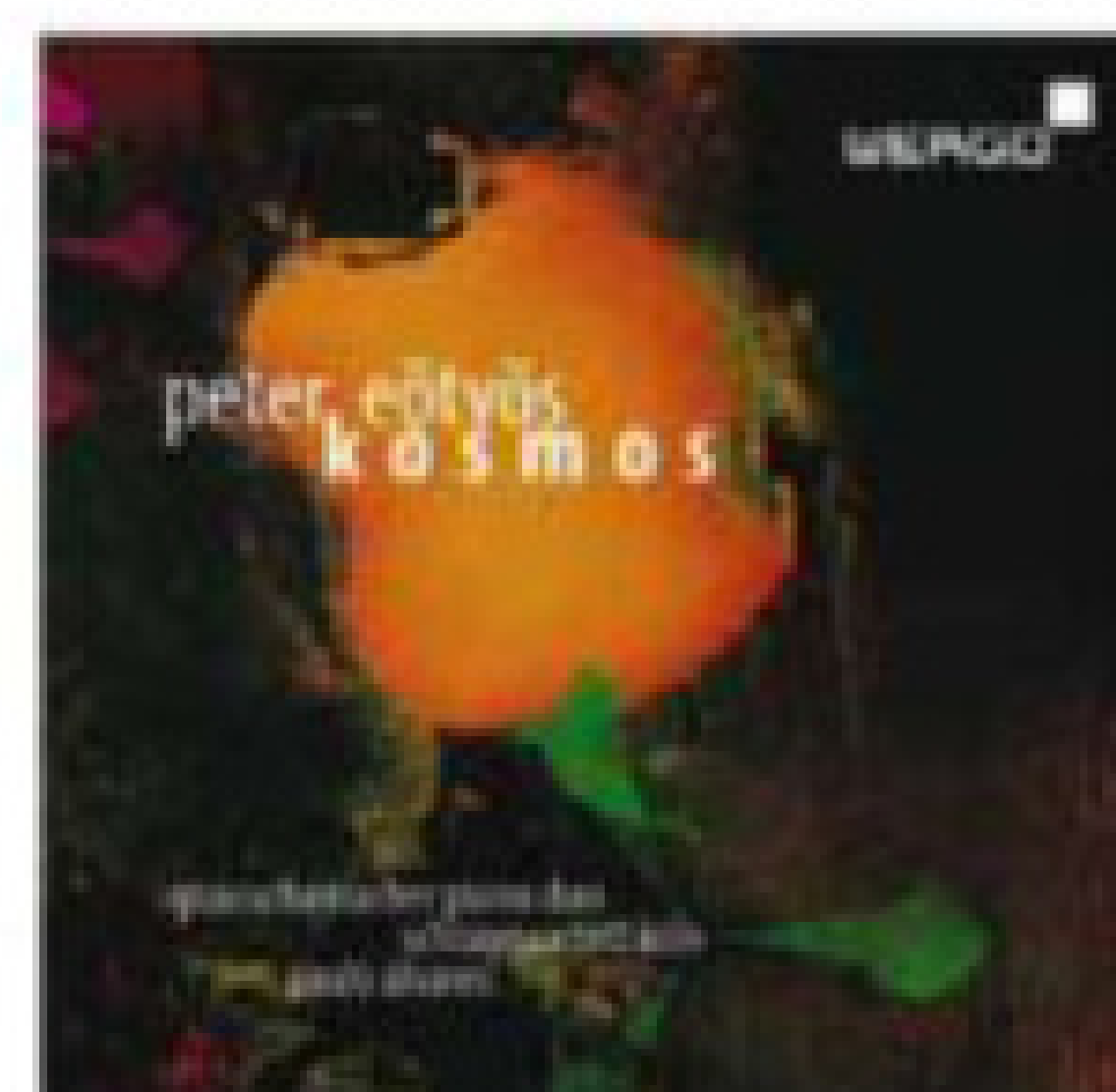
Eötvös

Kosmos^a. Psalm 151^b. Sonata per sei^c

^cPaulo Álvares *kybd*^{ac}GrauSchumacher

Piano Duo; ^{bc}Cologne Percussion Quartet

Wergo © WER6784-2 (54' • DDD)



Kosmos for two pianos is Peter Eötvös's youthful response to Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, these short, concentrated explorations of single technical features become something altogether more expansive and diverse in a bold, even brash response to Yuri Gagarin's pioneering space flight. There are huge contrasts within its 15-minute span, dating from 1961 but revised in 1999. Riskily static at one extreme, turbulently volatile at the other, the whole work has an

authentically awestruck character and an infectious lack of inhibition that Eötvös usefully preserves in his more recent music.

The *Sonata per sei* for two pianos, three percussionists and a sampler keyboard player (2006) also references Bartók, playing a kind of boisterous aesthetic football with the Sonata for two pianos and percussion. But there's nothing disrespectful or parodistic about the piece. Eötvös seizes on Bartók's restless 1930s odyssey through Europe and on to America to suggest a form that seems almost cinematic, juxtaposing the eloquent spaciousness of the slower music against glittering toccatas that move closer to the un-Bartókian shimmer of Boulez's *sur Incises*.

Eötvös's toccatas are more jazzy and euphonious than Boulez's. But *Psalm 151* (1993), his tribute to Frank Zappa for four percussionists, shuns the breezier moods of *Kosmos* and *Sonata per sei*. Like all laments, it's music about absence, and offers a kind of resonant, steadily unfolding ritual that slows down the passage of time to the point where monotony isn't entirely avoided. All three of these compositions benefit from superbly confident performances and the sound could not be more vivid.

Arnold Whittall

Lopes-Graça

Nove Danças breves. Variações sobre um tema popular português, Op 1. Piano Sonata No 2.

Ao fio dos anos e das horas

Artur Pizarro *pf*

Capriccio © C5196 (79' • DDD)

Lopes-Graça

'Complete Works for Violin and Piano and Solo Violin'

Sonatinas^a – No 1, Op 10; No 2, Op 11. Prelúdio, capricho e galope, Op 33^a. Trois Pièces, Op 118^a.

Pequeno tríptico, Op 124^a. Prelúdio e fuga, Op 137. Quatro Miniaturas, Op 218^a. Esponsais, Op 230. Adágio doloroso e Fantasia, Op 242^a

Bruno Monteiro *vn*^a João Paulo Santos *pf*

Naxos © 9 70177 (71' • DDD)

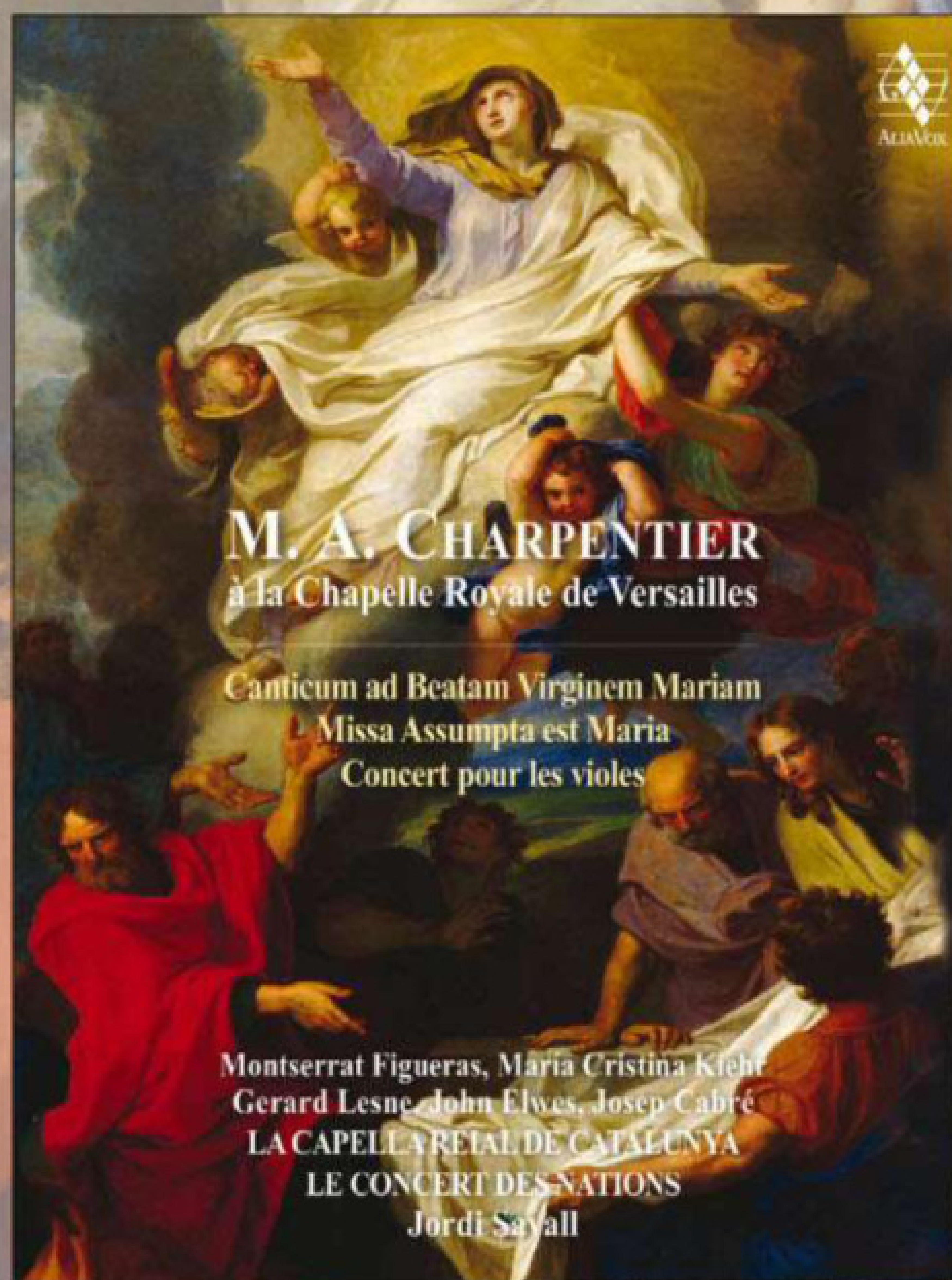


For two discs of music by Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906-93) to arrive for review simultaneously is a demonstration of the richness of all that is available on record. Powerful and single-minded, Lopes-Graça will also appeal to those who enjoy winking out a treasure-hunt of influences.



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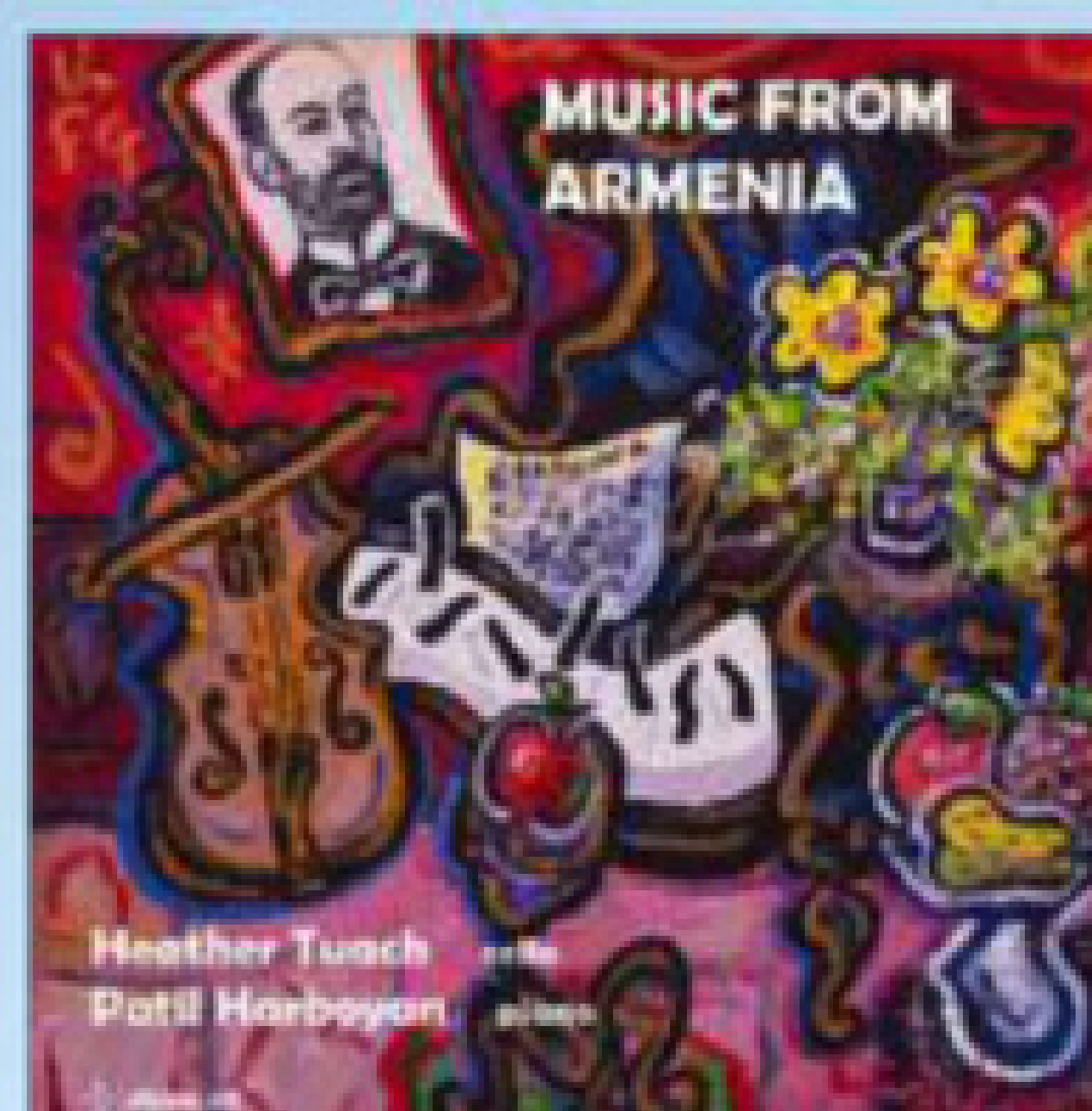
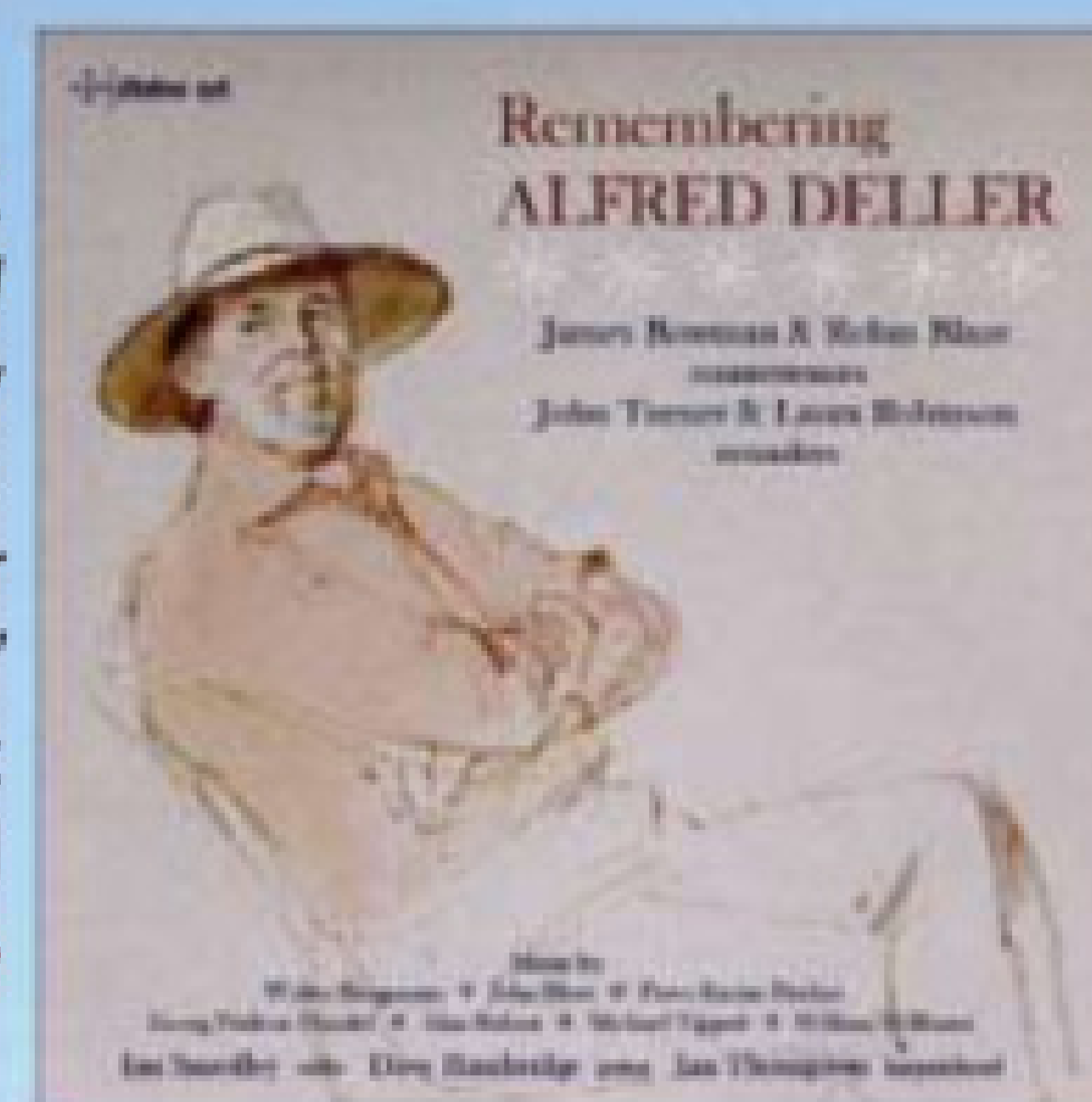
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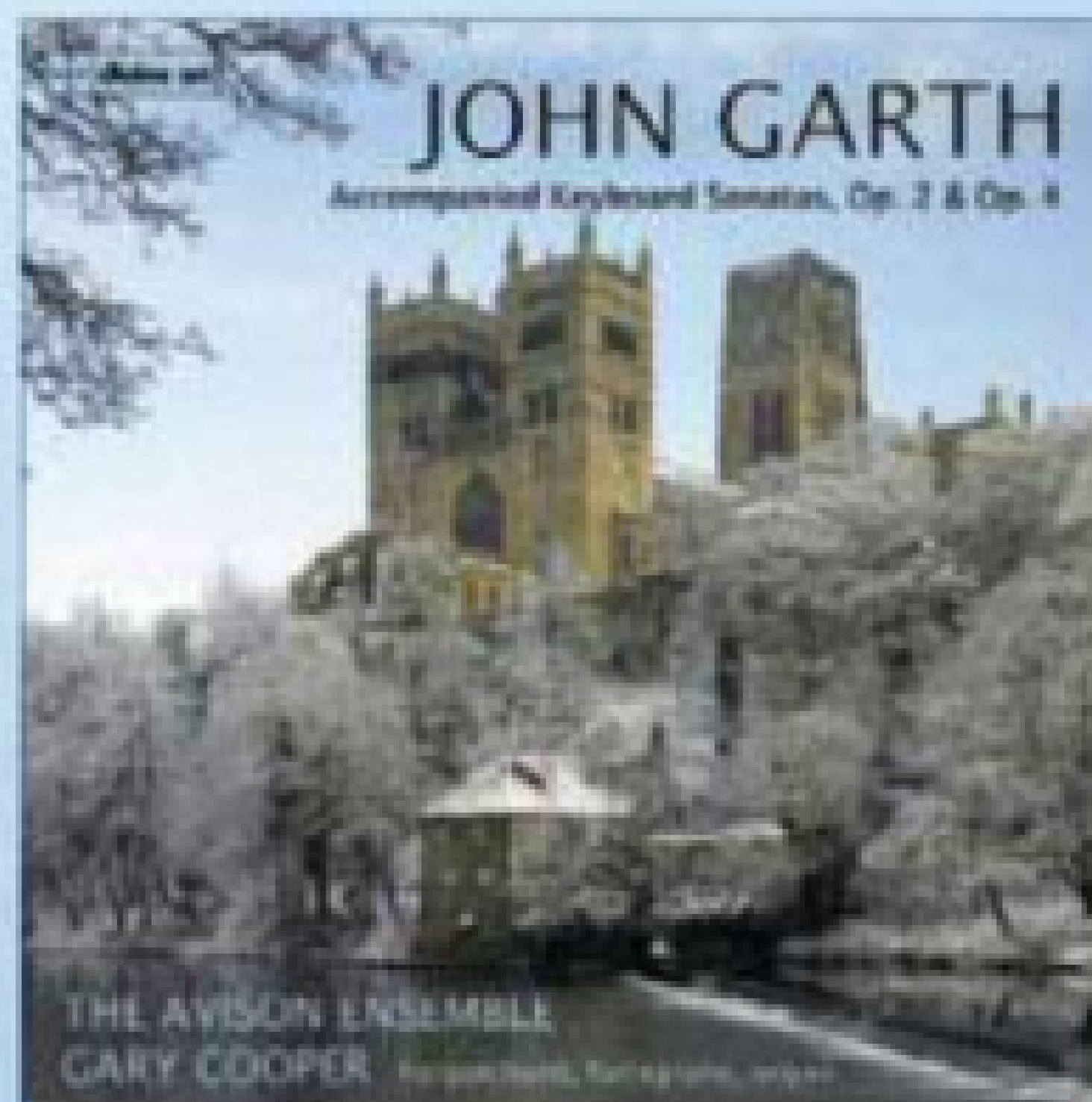
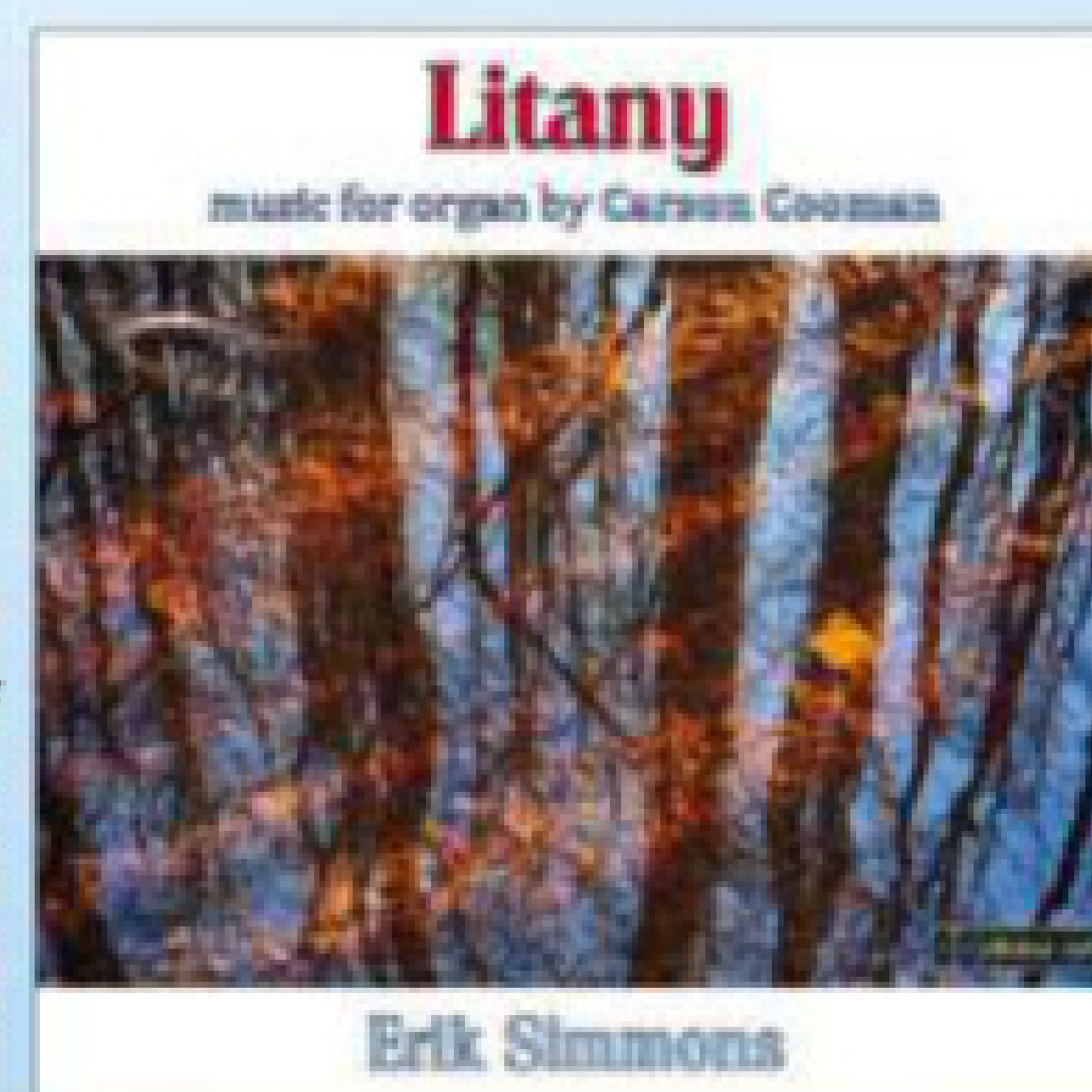
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– The Classical Reviewer

ERIK SIMMONS

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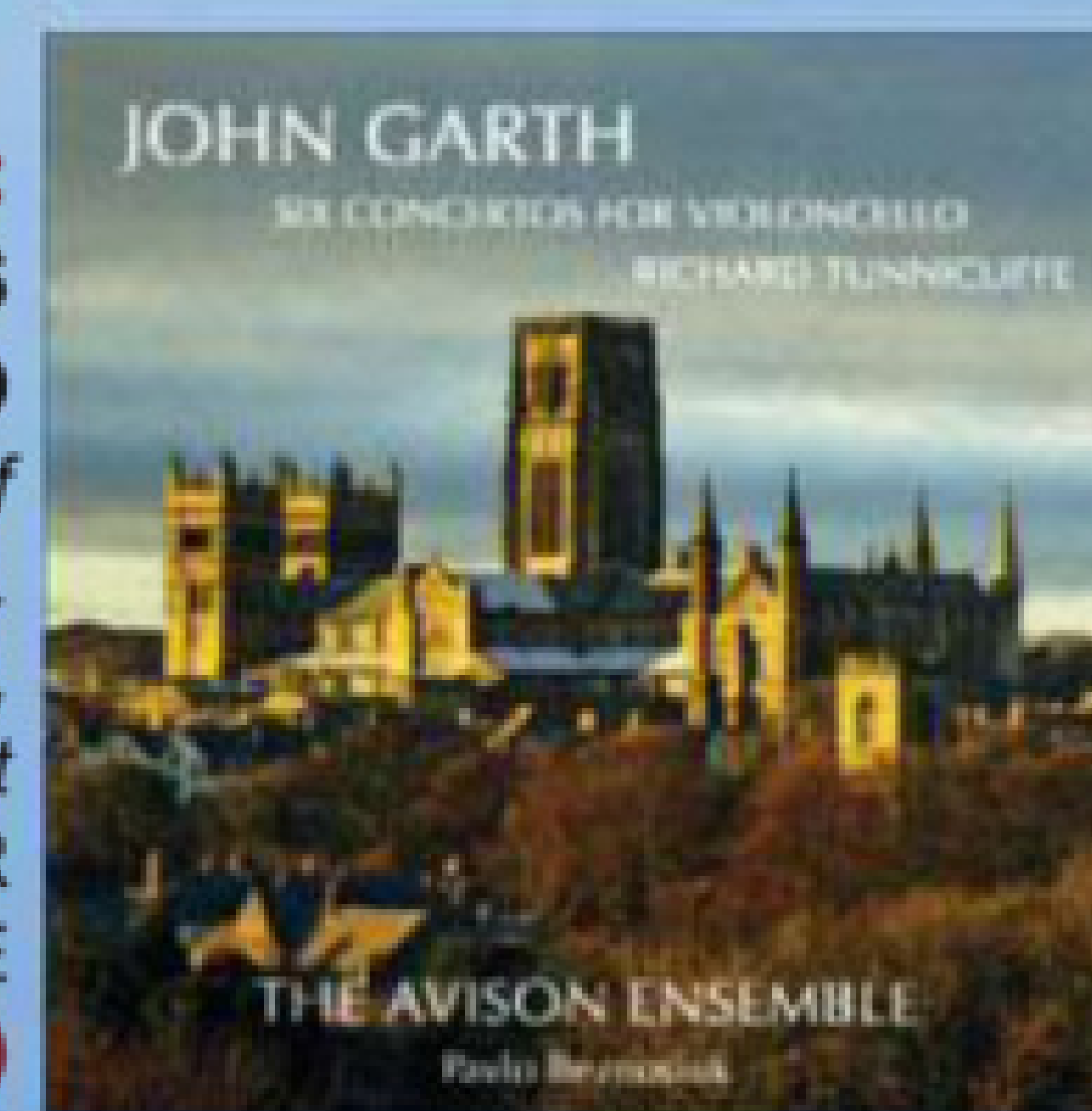
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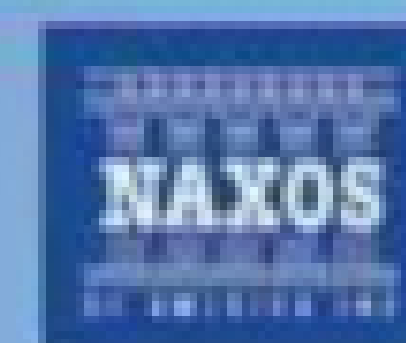
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New Zealand: Ode Records Russia & Czech Republic: R.C.D.

The ghosts of major figures from the 20th century haunt pages that are nonetheless transformed by a dedication to Portuguese folksong and dance, and by the composer's own distinctive character. Artur Pizarro's brilliant and urgently committed recital ranges widely through memories of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Bartók, Debussy and Ravel. Spain, too, is recalled in the fierce rhythms of Falla's *Fantasia bética* (the *Allegro giusto* from the Second Sonata) and yet all these influences are transmuted into music of a pungent singularity. And whether you warm to the way the Second Sonata's finale swerves from earlier economy into intricacy, or the widely varied aphorisms of *Ao fio dos anos e das horas* ('About years and hours'), you are struck at every turn by the composer's compulsive and insistent voice.

Naxos gives us the complete works for violin and piano and solo violin, further evidence of both range and individuality. The *Prelúdio e fuga* and *Esponsais* for solo violin are cruelly exposed and demanding, their difficulties dispatched with unfailing assurance and eloquence by Bruno Monteiro. He is joined by João Paulo Santos elsewhere, a virtuoso partnership in the phantom chase of the *Presto* from the Second Sonata and in the Galop (*Preludio, capricho e galope*), where the composer comes close to relaxing into a *jeu d'esprit*, though not without a sardonic undertow. Both discs are well recorded (the Naxos very closely, though this adds to a sense of immediacy). Admittedly Lopes-Graça is an acquired taste but he is also a composer of a special integrity. Highly successful records, then, and not just for explorers of music off the beaten track. **Bryce Morrison**

Martinů • Mustonen • Sibelius

Martinů Cello Sonatas – No 1, H277; No 2, H286; No 3, H340 **Mustonen** Cello Sonata **Sibelius** *Malinconia*, Op 20

Steven Isserlis vc **Olli Mustonen** pf

BIS (F) BIS2042 (78' • DDD/DSD)



Though certainly known among cellists, the three Martinů cello sonatas don't

turn up on chamber music programmes with the frequency that they deserve, and not due to any compositional deficits. However, the airy, expansive Martinů heard in his symphonies is only glimpsed amid certain chord-voicings and harmonic progressions in these dense, heterogeneous works, bursting with ideas, maybe too

many for their own good, sometimes knocking into each other, particularly in the piano-writing. Tonal centres don't stay put for very long. Often a separate bitonal layer is in there. Only in the Third Sonata does one hear more codified, mainstream Martinů but that's only because the use of simultaneous tonalities is more a source of spice and wit.

Or so it seems in these performances, which unapologetically don't look back. Isserlis and Mustonen enjoy considerable chemistry and are so much in the moment that matters of continuity and architecture are mainly taken care of by their headlong momentum. Isserlis makes lower registers growl (especially apparent in the fine SACD sound). Mustonen relishes the interruptive qualities, the outbursts and abrupt changes of direction with a sonority that one might describe as aggressively crystalline. The one movement that's more expansive than busy is the Second Sonata's *Andantino* but Mustonen takes the music to a particularly anguished place, revealing it as some of the most singular music in all of Martinů's considerable output. Though only four minutes long, it feels epic.

The three sonatas are separated by Mustonen's own Sonata for cello and piano, dating from 2006, which, like Martinů, stands halfway down the road to modernism. There's adventure here but the thematic material is unexceptional in ways that becomes more apparent on repeated hearings. Then there's Sibelius's curious *Malinconia*, Op 20, whose rather good moments are buried behind what sound like parodies of Saint-Saëns and Chopin, with everything cut short by a whopping case of attention deficit disorder.

The Chandos disc by Paul and Huw Watkins takes a more balanced, lyrical view of Martinů's sonatas and is filled out by the *Variations on a Slovak Theme* and *Variations on a Theme of Rossini* – not major works but a better counterpoint to the formidable music around it. **David Patrick Stearns**

Martinů – selected comparison:

P & H Watkins (8/10) (CHAN) CHAN10602

Mendelssohn

'Complete Works for String Quartet'

Mendelssohn String Quartets – E flat^a; No 1, Op 12^b; No 2, Op 13^c; No 3, Op 44 No 1^d; No 4, Op 44 No 2^e; No 5, Op 44 No 3^f; No 6, Op 80^g. Four Pieces, Op 81^h. Twelve Fuguesⁱ. Frage, Op 9 No 1^j **Fanny Mendelssohn** String Quartet^k ^l**Sophie Bevan** sop^l ^m**Julian Milford** pf^h **Artea Quartet**; ⁿ**Badke Quartet**; ^o**Benyounes Quartet**; ^p**Castalian Quartet**; ^q**Cavaleri Quartet**; ^r**Idomeneo Quartet**; ^s**Navarra Quartet**; ^t**Piatti Quartet**; ^u**Sacconi Quartet**; ^v**Wu Quartet** Champs Hill (S) (4) CHRC085 (4h 27' • DDD)



The six quartets of Mendelssohn, along with the assorted other pieces for string

quartet, form a firm point of reference for a number of works by other composers, including Schumann's monumental Op 41 Quartets of 1847. Those works, in particular, were dedicated to Mendelssohn, although both composers were fundamentally and directly influenced by Beethoven's late quartets. Although Mendelssohn's own father described them as an 'indecipherable, uncorrected horror', Felix and his sister Fanny studied them with almost the same degree of obsessive intensity that they reserved for JS Bach.

In this vastly enjoyable complete set of Mendelssohn's music for string quartet (and it really means 'complete', as it includes Fanny's String Quartet), the first distinct references to Beethoven can be found in the first of the numbered quartets. It is confusingly numbered No 2 (it was written in 1827, two years before No 1) and is cleverly ascribed here to the most experienced of the young groups to appear in this collection, the Sacconi Quartet. There is a strong sense of four distinct musical voices enjoying a conversation in their performance – No 2 is in no way an egotistical piece and the batsqueaks of romanticism do not ever interfere with what was, at this point, still a conservative style. As a result, No 2 throws up more questions than the other, more overtly complicated quartets, and the Sacconis, with their elegant and understated performance, give a strong impression of being best placed to answer them.

The newly formed Benyounes Quartet start the collection with the even earlier E flat major Quartet and a performance that has all the callow warmth that the piece needs, and with a reserve more commonly to be found in groups that have been playing together much longer. It is occasionally at the cost of some romantic flourishes that, used sparingly, can lift Mendelssohn's chamber music into a new realm of beauty. There is, in fact, very little *portamento* in any of the performances on these discs and whereas the overarching energy and drama of the Piatti Quartet's performance of the Fifth Quartet can support its lack, it is more noticeable, for instance, in the Idomeneo Quartet's otherwise beautifully blended performance of the Quartet in E flat, No 1.

The question of whether to play elements into the music that aren't there in



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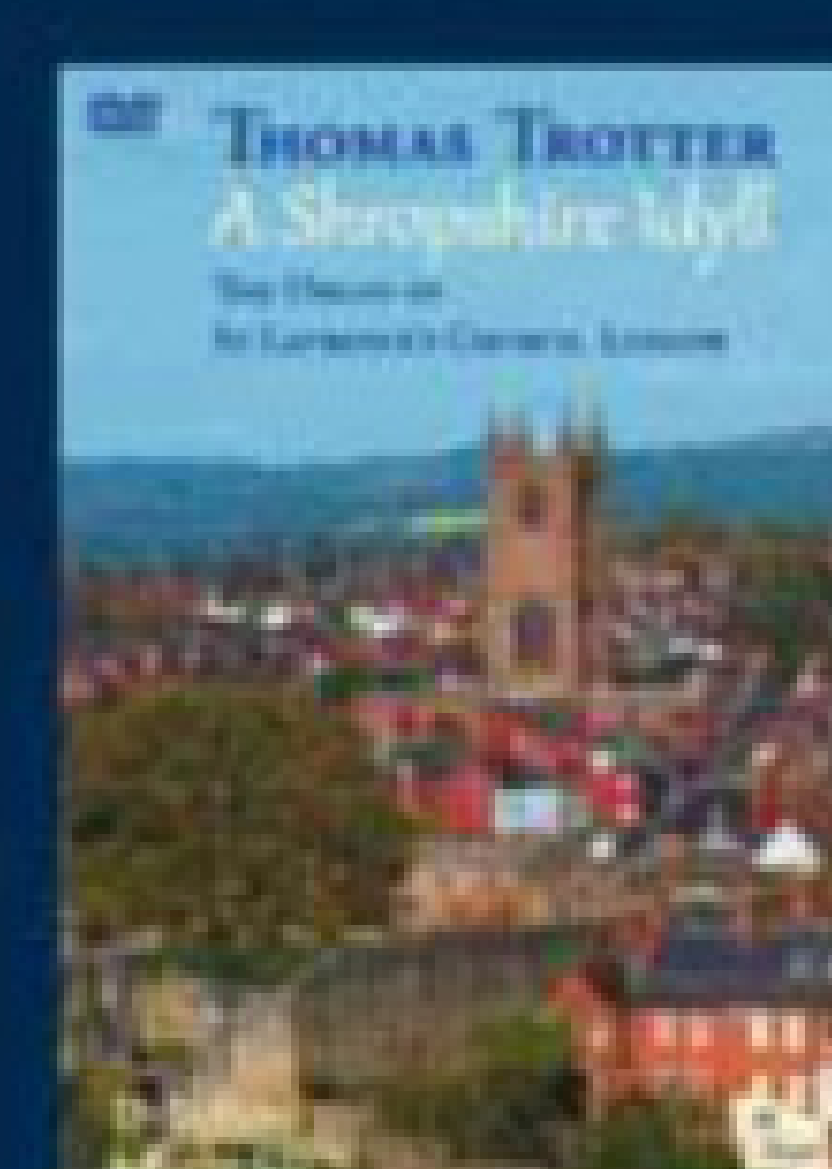
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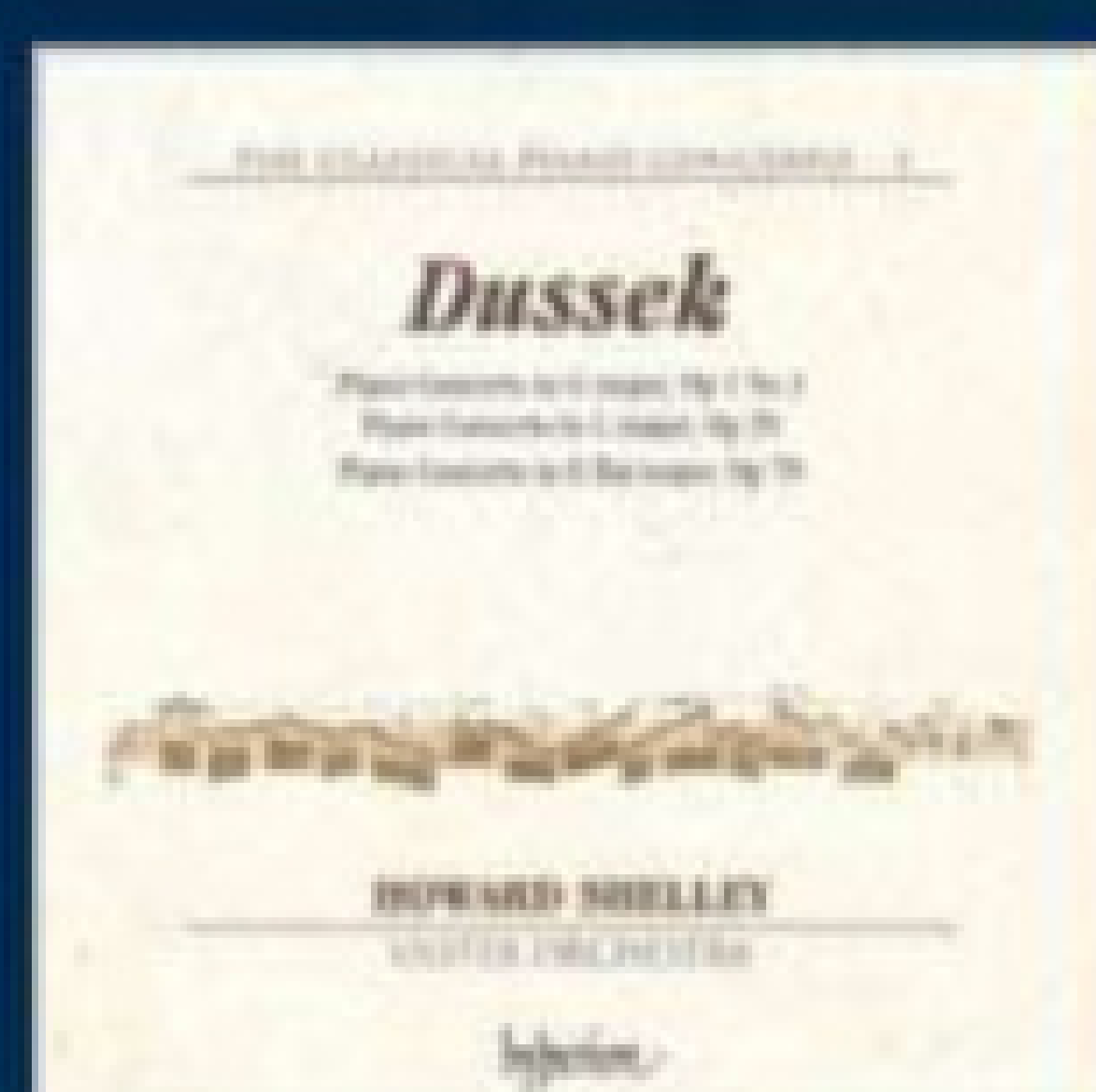
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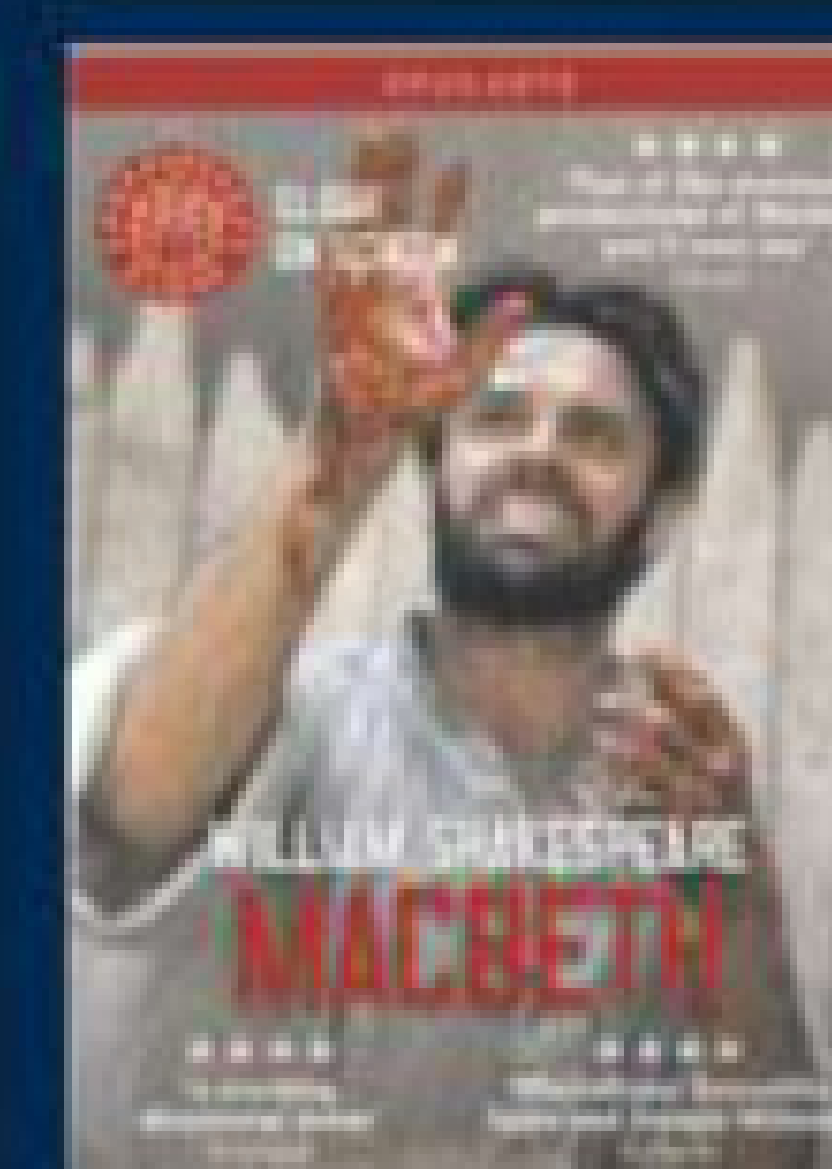
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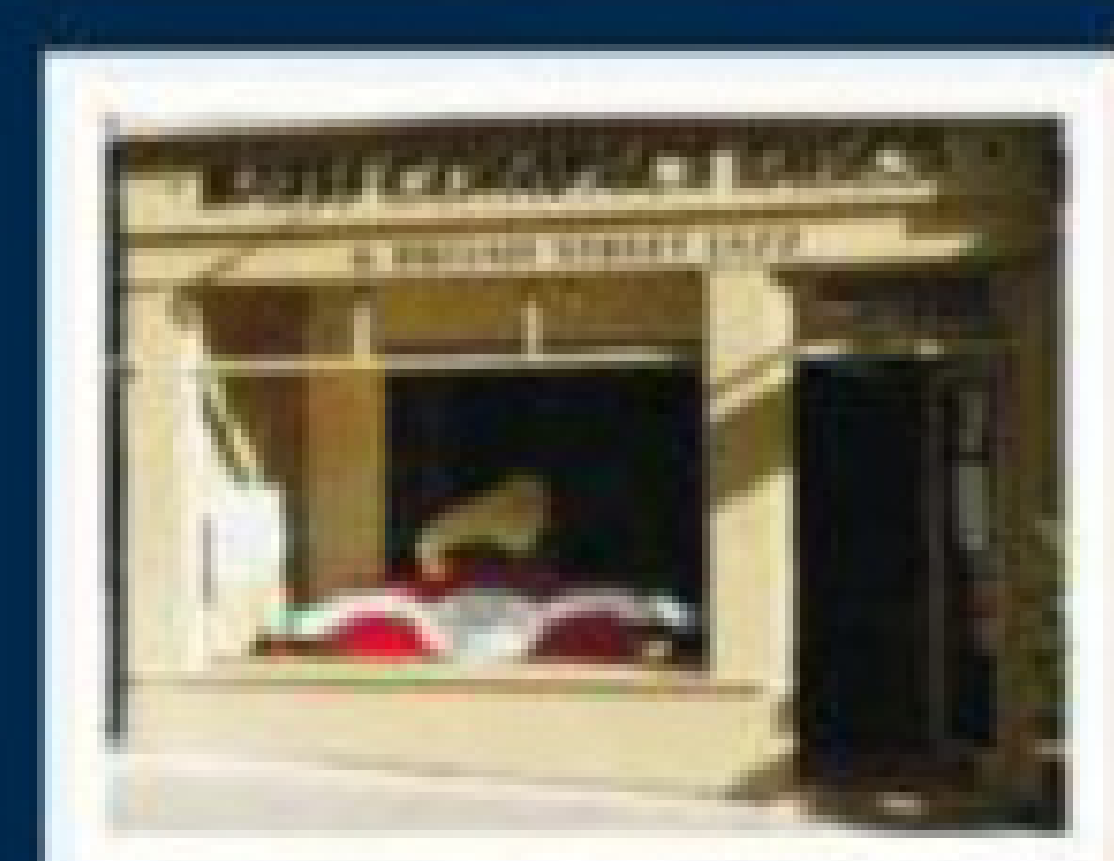
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order to pep it up, or to draw back and let it speak for itself, is constantly bubbling under the surface in Mendelssohn's chamber music, and the first two quartets of Op 44, played by the established Navarra Quartet and the relatively young Castalian Quartet, inject a real sense of the change of direction between the earlier quartets and the late chamber works. The Castalian's sound can very occasionally veer to the verge of muddy in their eagerness to aim for the end of a phrase, also resulting in a general lack of anchored calm in the slow movement, but in general they continue with great accomplishment the immaculately executed white-knuckle ride set up by the Navarras in the first of the Op 44 set (and especially the *Presto*). These two quartets represent such a turning point that performances of them vary to more of a degree than the others, and both quartets here take a quietly mature approach but with the sense of foreboding and acceleration that aren't fully realised until the final two major pieces: the Requiem for Fanny of the Sixth Quartet and the Four Pieces, Op 81.

So it is quite right that at the end of the Op 44 set the tides of performance truly turn, and we're forced to sit up and listen. The Piatti Quartet open the E flat major Quartet, No 5, with such commitment and perfect ensemble that you might think you were listening to a small, perfectly homogeneous string orchestra; and to hear the final two works is to hear Mendelssohn fulfilling his potential as a great Romantic composer. Although there is a sense that the Badke's tempo is not entirely secure, especially in the opening movement, their performance of the Sixth Quartet and the Artea's of the Four Pieces are among the most insightful and moving on the disc.

The collection finishes with Fanny's own String Quartet, and is a dramatic illustration of how intense their conversations must have been, how they thought both similarly and differently, and how bereft Mendelssohn must have been without her. It's a shame, therefore, that the early, quasi-Bachian pastiche Twelve Fugues (played with appropriately detached insight and intelligence by the Wu Quartet) intervenes in the final portmanteau of the context and evolution of the greatest collection of Mendelssohn's work, in such an accomplished survey.

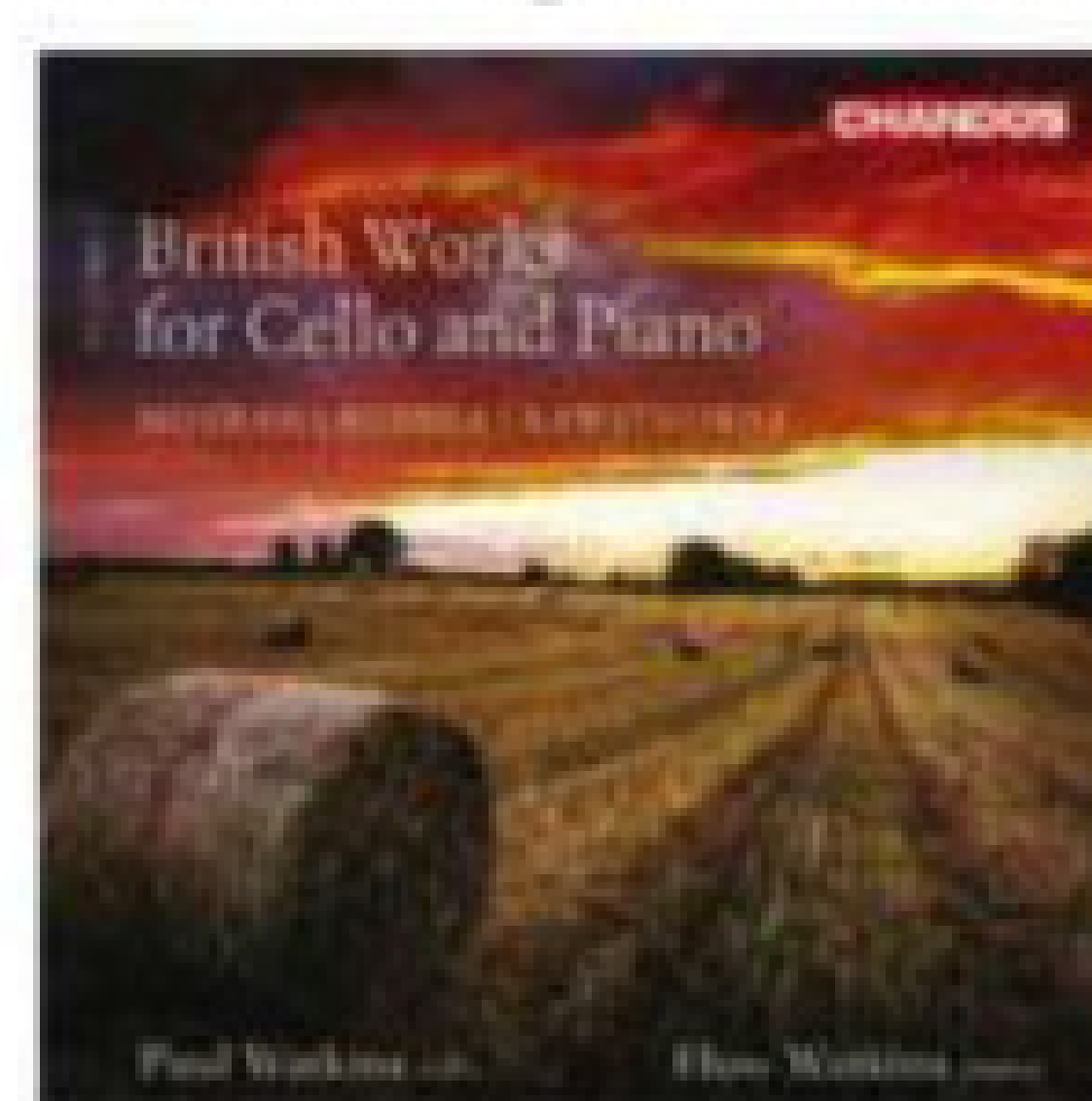
Caroline Gill

Moeran · Rubbra · Rawsthorne

'British Works for Cello and Piano, Vol 3'

Moeran Cello Sonata **Rawsthorne** Cello Sonata **Rubbra** Cello Sonata, Op 60

Paul Watkins *vc* Huw Watkins *pf*
Chandos © CHAN10818 (59' • DDD)



Here's another absorbing volume of British masterworks for cello and piano, all three of which date from the 1940s and are played with understanding, commitment and irreproachable technical skill.

The account of the G minor Sonata that Rubbra wrote in 1946 for the cellist William Pleeth and his wife Margaret Good impresses by dint of its intrepid emotional scope and unfailing lucidity, these performers proving acutely responsive to this music's deeply nourishing contrapuntal and spiritual reach. Likewise, Moeran's gripping A minor Sonata receives hugely eloquent treatment, the playing as rich-toned and ardent as one could hope to hear. Moeran thought it one of his very best things – a verdict triumphantly borne out by the sustained intensity of expression of the anguished slow movement, which in turn plunges without a break into an excitingly taut rondo finale. If you don't yet know this riveting piece, let me urge investigation. Satisfyingly compact, meatily argued and impeccably crafted, Rawsthorne's 1948 C major Sonata represents another durably rewarding creation. It was written for Anthony Pini, and, like all three works here, will certainly repay closer scrutiny.

With ideally intimate sound emanating from Dunwich's Potton Hall and perspicacious booklet-notes by the late Calum MacDonald, this is a superlative issue in every way. **Andrew Achenbach**

RR Parry

'Music for Heart and Breath'

Quartet for Heart and Breath^a. Heart and Breath Sextet^b. For Heart, Breath and Orchestra^c. Interruptions I-VII (Heart and Breath Nonet)^d. Duet for Heart and Breath^e. Quartet for Heart and Breath^f

^aNadia Sirota *va* ^dAaron Dessner, ^dBryce Dessner *gtrs* **Richard Reed Parry** ^d*db*/^e*pf* ^f**Kronos Quartet**; ^a*yMusic*; ^c*orchestra* / ^{abc}**Nico Muhly** *pf/celesta*
DG © 479 3061GH (66' • DDD)



Best known as arranger and multi-instrumentalist in the rock band Arcade Fire, Richard Reed Parry has also been building a classical catalogue of significance. The present disc comprises a cycle of pieces

entitled 'Music for Heart and Breath' – its underlying premise being that the playing of the musicians is geared to their individual and collective pulse-rates; their inhaling and exhaling setting the music's tempo on both a localised and long-term basis. If this seems perilously close to a gimmick (Heinz Holliger attempted something not so dissimilar in his *Cardiophonie* of four decades earlier), the outcome is logical and satisfying.

After the capricious dialogue of *Quartet for Heart and Breath* (initially heard here in its sextet format), the greater variety of *Heart and Breath Sextet* readily draws the listener in through its timbral and textural allure, and then *For Heart, Breath and Orchestra* extends this process on to a larger tonal and expressive canvas. Most arresting, though, is *Interruptions (Heart and Breath Nonet)* – seven brief yet diverse pieces that effortlessly bridge any perceived 'divide' between Parry's experimental and classical tendencies. *Duet for Heart and Breath* ostensibly rounds off the sequence with its touching interplay between viola and piano, though here the original Kronos version of *Quartet...* is included to bring the cycle deftly and appealingly full-circle.

These performances – featuring such exponents of post-minimalism as guitarist Bryce Dessner and the currently ubiquitous Nico Muhly – are formidably attuned to Parry's requirements. Those who already possess Edwin Outwater's account of the orchestral work will have heard it in a more bracingly projected realisation, though the present reading is of a piece with the inward focus of the music-making evident here. Clearly and spaciouly recorded, it offers a listening experience that is riveting or dismaying but assuredly never dull.

Richard Whitehouse

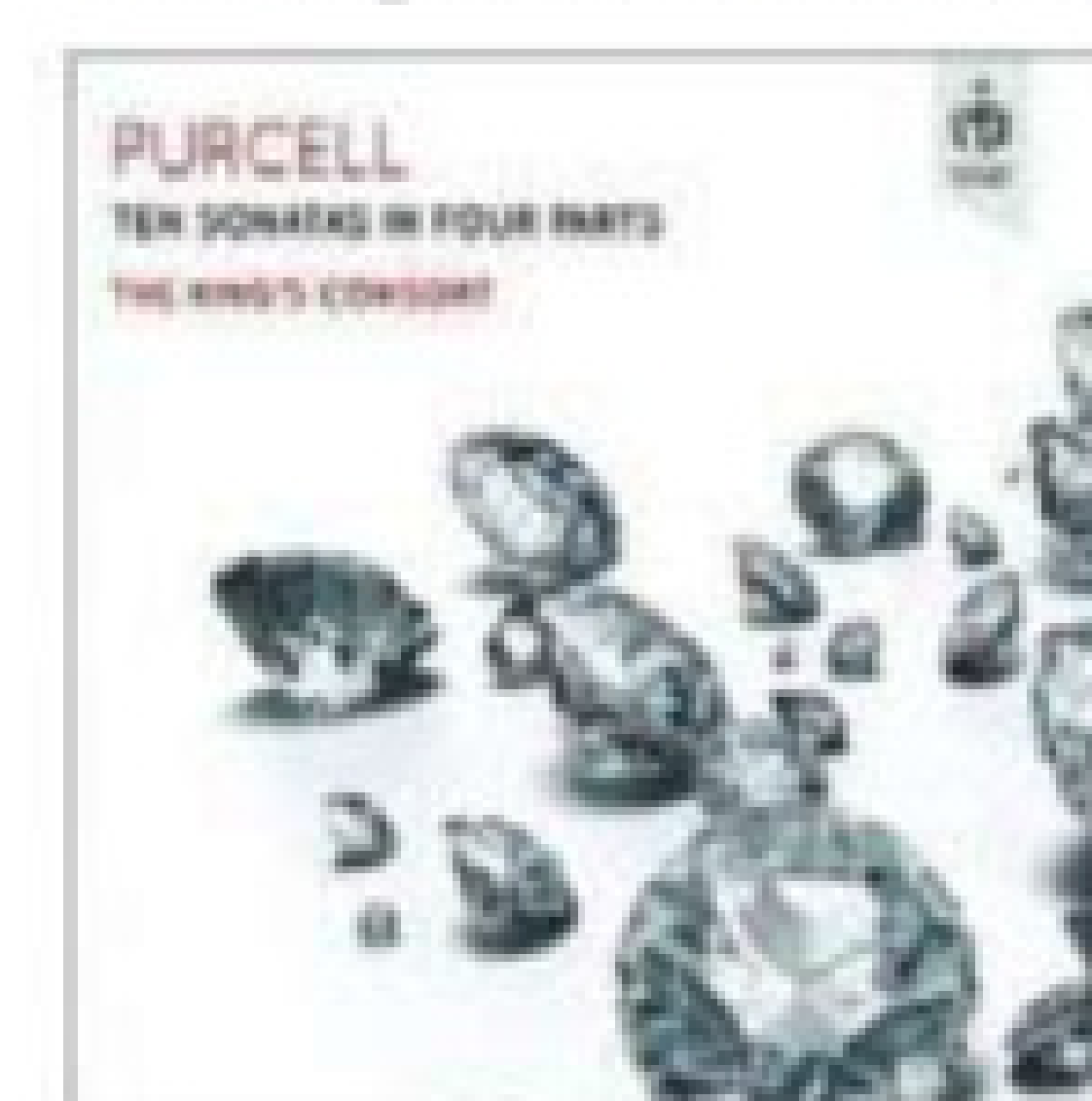
For Heart, Breath and Orchestra – comparative version:
Kitchener-Waterloo SO, Outwater (ANA) AN2 9992

Purcell

Ten Sonatas in Four Parts, Z802-811

The King's Consort / Robert King org/hpd

Vivat © VIVAT106 (78' • DDD)



It has been a long time since The King's Consort recorded any music by the English Orpheus, so this survey of 10 sonatas in four parts published posthumously by the composer's widow Frances in 1697 is most welcome. An eminent discography includes exceptional versions by the Purcell Quartet (Chandos, 10/89), London Baroque (Harmonia Mundi, 8/93), and The King's

Consort's own estranged sibling *Retrospect* (Linn, 9/09). Robert King quietly demonstrates his capabilities as a keyboard continuo player, working unobtrusively from the chamber organ in partnership with theorist Lynda Sayce and bass viol player Susanne Heinrich.

The recording, made in the concert hall of the Menuhin School, has crisp clarity of detail, and these performances have direct impact in quick music rather than the soft finesse of some versions cited above, yet frequently the defining characteristic of these compelling performances is when Heinrich's viol and the continuo group reach down towards their lowest bass notes; this weaves together with agile fiddlers Cecilia Bernardini and Huw Daniel to concoct irresistible intoxications, such as the melancholic *Adagio* that opens the Sonata in D minor (Z805) and also the increasingly tender suspensions in the *Largo* at the heart of the Sonata in B minor (Z802). The *Vivace* introduction to the Sonata in C major (Z808) has a sunny joviality and numerous Canzonas offer plenty of vibrant conversation, but avid Purcellians will bask most contentedly in the self-indulgently chromatic pathos of slow music such as the extraordinarily beautiful *Adagio* commencing the Sonata in E flat major (Z803) and the seven-minute-long Chaconne in G minor (Z807).

David Vickers

Ravel · Shostakovich

Ravel Piano Trio Shostakovich Piano Trios – No 1, Op 8; No 2, Op 67

Smetana Trio

Supraphon © SU4145-2 (68' • DDD)



Shostakovich's wartime Second Trio, such a powerful work, gets a splendid

performance. From the opening, with its contrapuntal lines of unusual contrasting timbres and register, to the finale's alternation of fierce passion with sinister mechanical progressions, the Smetana players know just what to do for maximum effect. The manic *scherzo* is notable for its rhythmic vitality and clear articulation, its syncopations sounding truly disruptive, and the finale's *Allegretto* tempo is sustained with admirable firmness. The passacaglia third movement brings playing of intense expression from the violin and cello. I'm not entirely sure about the touches of *rubato*, however; maintaining exact rhythm here would, I feel, enhance the movement's implacable character.

The First Trio was written when Shostakovich was 17: cast as an ambitiously extended single movement, it's astonishingly assured. There are only occasional pointers to his more mature music – the predominating style is of post-Rachmaninov romanticism. Jitka Čechová makes the most of the grand-style pianism, and altogether this is a most convincing performance.

The Ravel, too, is given a large-scale performance but I'm not sure that the work isn't better served by playing where the emphasis is more on clarity and delicacy. This is the case with the recording by Frank Braley and the Capuçon brothers, Braley being more sparing in his use of the pedal, and the French strings generally producing a lighter tone than their Czech counterparts. But the Smetana Trio respond most beautifully to Ravel's more sensuous passages and give us a real sense of the work's breadth and emotional range.

Duncan Druce

Ravel – selected comparison:

R & G Capuçon, Braley (VIRG) 545492-2

AR Thomas

'Selected Chamber & Piano Works'

Scat^a. Six Piano Etudes^b. Double Helix

(Mansueto Tribute)^c. Ring Flourish Blaze^d.

A Circle Around the Sun^a. Pilgrim Soul^e.

Traces^f. Toft Serenade^g. Starlight Ribbons^h

^eStefan Hersh, ^gCharles Morey, ^eSteve Rose, ^fJanet

Sung, ^cYuan-Qing ^{vns} ^bAmy Briggs, ^fMakiko Hirata,

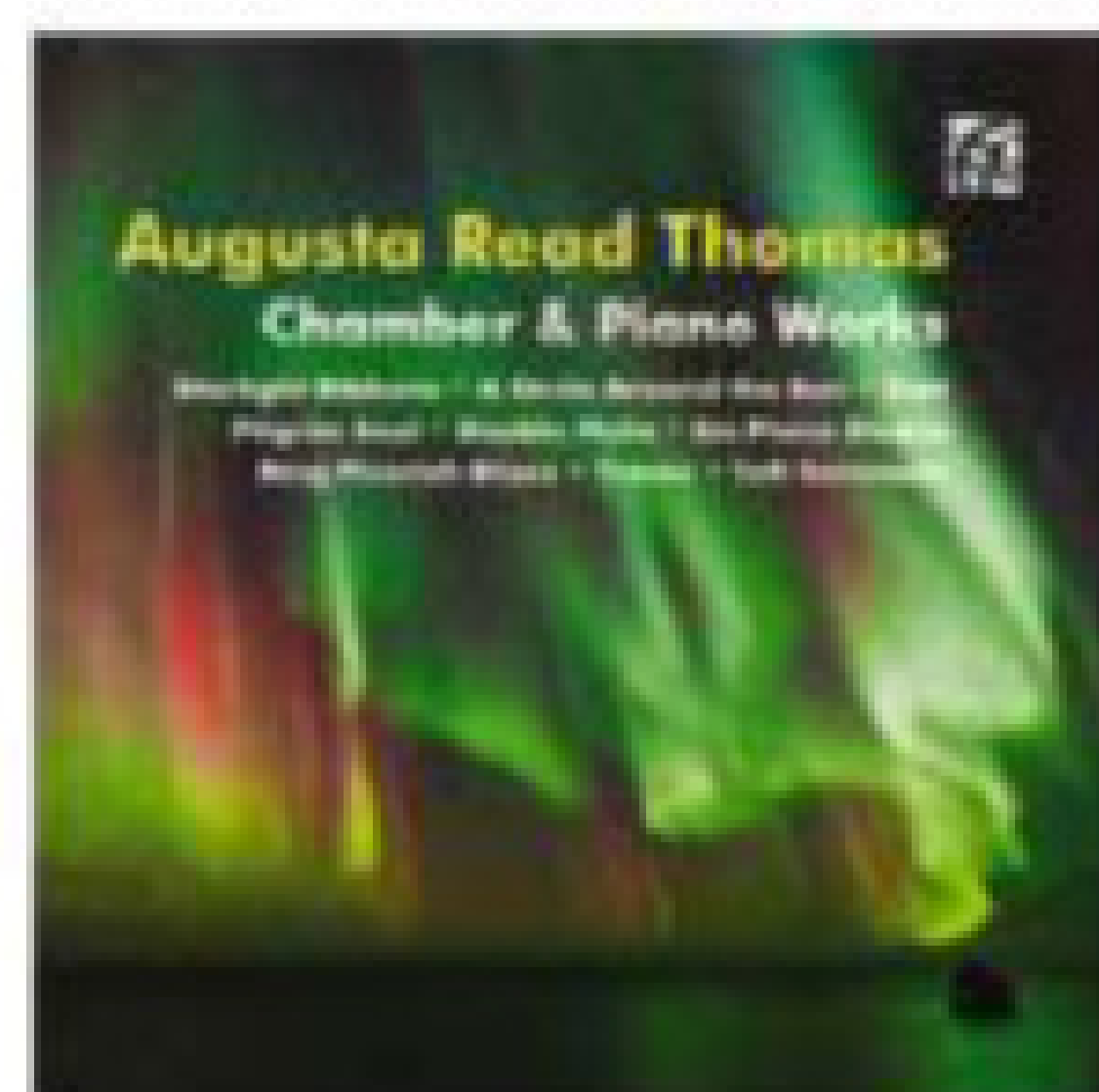
^gFrank Huang, ^hDaniel Schlosberg ^{pf} ^eRobert

Walters ^{cora} ^aThe Walden Chamber Players;

^dSouthern Methodist University Wind Ensemble /

Jack Delaney

Nimbus Alliance © NI6261 (80' • DDD)



This disc of chamber and piano works by Augusta Read Thomas follows on from that of

her orchestral music (4/14) in reaffirming the consistency as well as the versatility of her idiom. Of the six chamber pieces, *Ring Flourish Blaze* is a fanfare of Varèse-like pungency, while *A Circle Around the Sun* (both 2000) is a piano trio whose two movements pointedly open out the music's tensile expression. *Toft Serenade* (2006) is a similarly compressed violin sonata whose relatively slow then fast movements comprise a finely poised duality, whereas *Scat* (2007) underlines the composer's interest in jazz with a breezy interplay between oboe, piano and string trio redolent of a 'jam session'. *Double Helix* is an inward dialogue for two violins, its eloquence intensified in *Pilgrim Soul* (both

2011) with its inspiration in Yeats, a study in linear expansion where the cor anglais both anticipates and echoes the interweaving violins.

The three piano pieces make for a viable conspectus of Thomas's musical evolution over the intervening 17 years. The *Six Etudes* (1996) is a set of homages to mentors and colleagues – ranging from the slowly dissolving sonorities of that to Luciano Berio in 'Orbital Beacons', via the spare eventfulness of that to Feldman in 'Rain at Funeral', to the unexpectedly jazzy verve of that to Pierre Boulez in 'On Twilight'. *Traces* (2007) then takes the allusive process further with such unlikely and yet enticing concoctions as Ástor Piazzolla crossed with John Coltrane in the distinctly hard-bopping 'Tango' or Thelonious Monk crossed with Chopin in the deceptively understated 'Impromptu'. *Starlight Ribbons* (2013) is the most extended piece on this disc – what might be termed a 'rhapsody' in which a host of allusions (never quotations) are vividly integrated by dint of some resourceful and idiomatic piano-writing.

Throughout this programme, the performances (mostly by the dedicatees or those who gave the premiere) are unfailingly responsive to Thomas's finely wrought and bracingly immediate language, while the sound betrays little evidence of having been compiled from a variety of sources. Those who have acquired the earlier disc will need no prompting with its successor.

Richard Whitehouse

'Belle époque'

Debussy String Quartet, Op 10 Menu Sonatine

Milhaud String Quartet No 1, Op 5

Galatea Quartet

Sony Classical © 88883 78821-2 (58' • DDD)

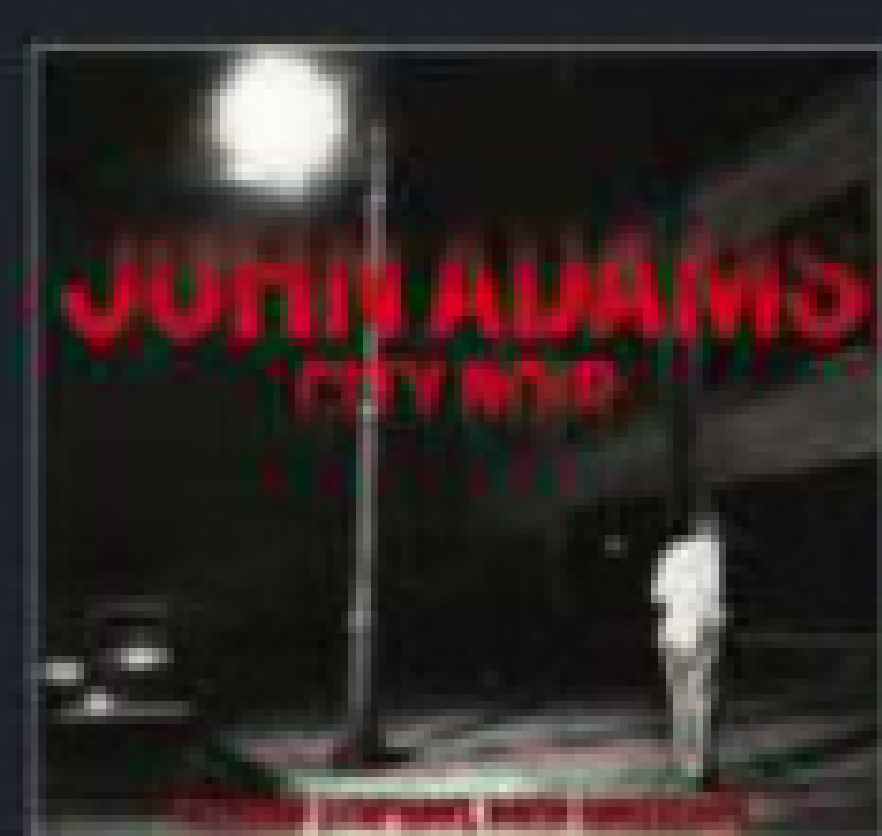


The Debussy String Quartet looks a little lonely on this new disc without the usual

Ravel quartet next to it or the Fauré String Quartet that increasingly completes the triptych of French works that changed the medium. Ah, but there were other important voices, say the Galatea Quartet, the Swiss group that follows up its enterprising disc of Ernst Bloch (2/12) with a collection that puts Debussy next to Milhaud and Menu for a change, and in ways that make you appreciate Debussy all the more.

All of them followed the 1893 Debussy quartet and clearly play off of it, showing

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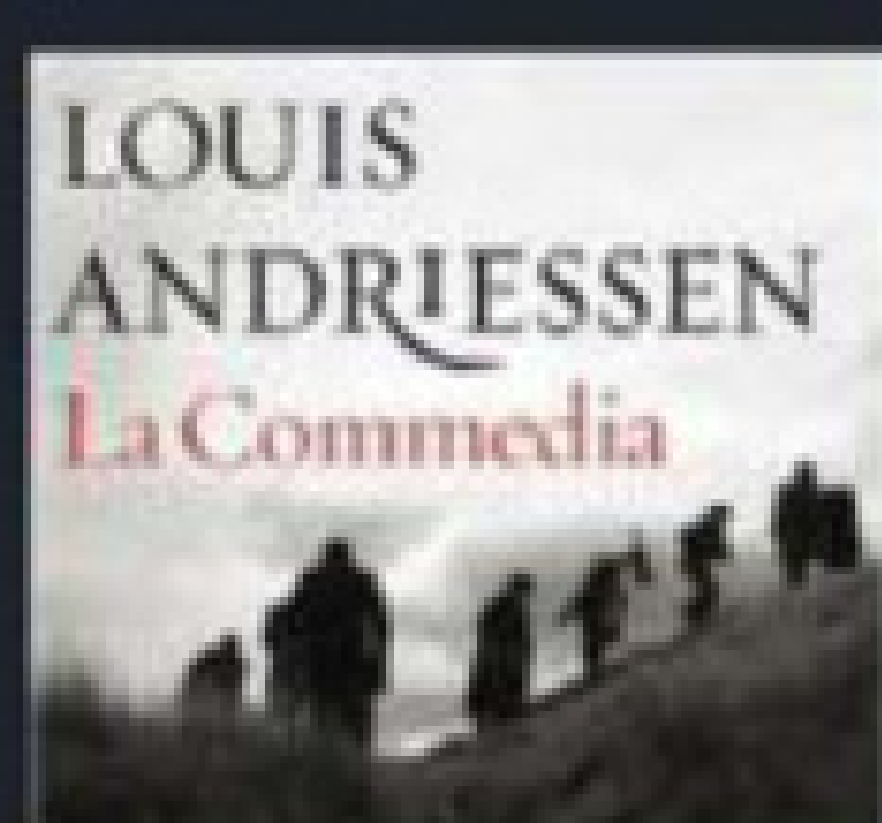


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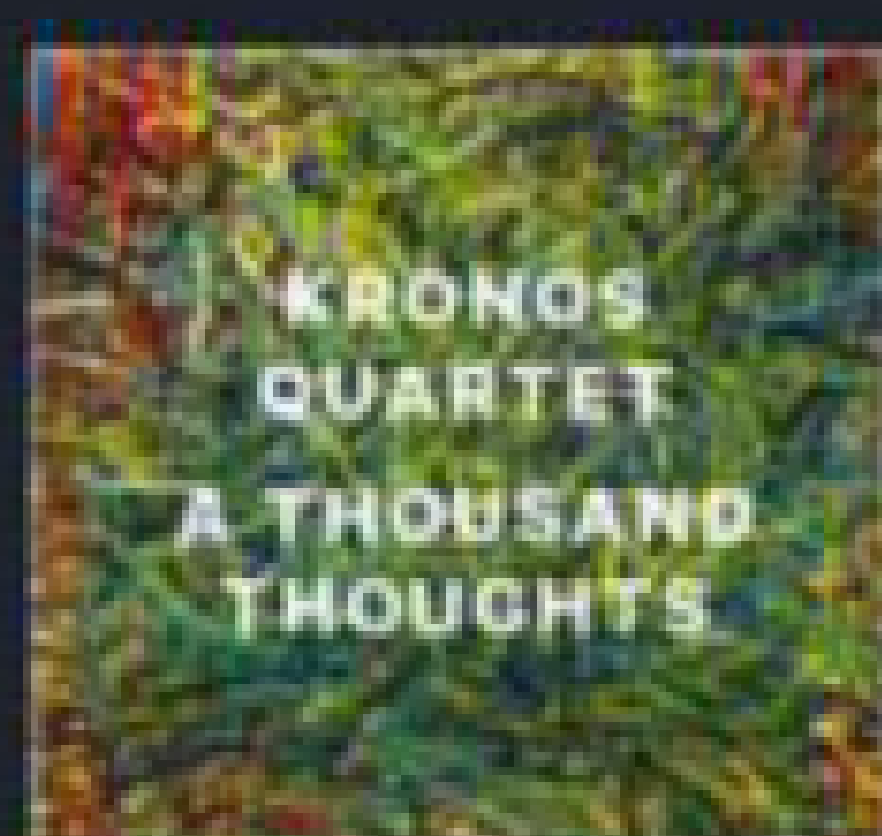
New York Times



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just how many different elements one could draw from, whether thematically or harmonically. But it's Debussy's way of writing four hugely different movements that feel like they belong together (and have certain thematic links) that Milhaud seized upon in the first of his 18 quartets, written in 1912, that intriguingly seems to begin in mid-sentence and goes on to be an extremely attractive, thoughtfully argued work. Besides that, the third and best of Milhaud's movements is influenced by the dark but quiet realms of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*: it can seem thematically weak on first hearing but turns out to be subtle and deeply insinuating upon return visits.

The *Sonatine* by Pierre Menu requires explanation. This student of Roger-Ducasse died in 1919 at the age of 23, a victim of the First World War, and is discussed (when at all) as a great French might-have-been along with Lili Boulanger. Though slight, the *Sonatine* is quite worthwhile, though the inevitable descriptions of it – a promising composer whose work sounds like Debussy's outtakes – shouldn't be mistaken for faint praise. If ever a piece leaves you wanting more, it's the Debussy Quartet. And here we have it.

The Galatea Quartet's command of their instruments gives the performances extra distinction: though not a group to indulge in a lot of colour, they give Debussy just enough intellectual rigour, the third movement marked by air-tight chord tunings with minimum vibrato that few quartets can deliver at most any register and volume, and do so in ways that reveal even greater depths in the music. The Milhaud performance has a sense of continuity that eludes the more prosaic Quatuor Parisii while also entering the music's nature imagery in ways that make the piece a forest of sound. As for the Menu, one has little comparison. This *Sonatine* performance appears to be the only work of his currently available on disc.

David Patrick Stearns

Milhaud – selected comparison:

Parisii Qt (A/02) (NAIV) V4900

'Live from Lugano 2013'

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15^a. Cello Sonata No 2, Op 5 No 2^b **Debussy** Petite Suite^c **Liszt** La lugubre gondola, S200^d **Offenbach** Gaîté parisienne (arr Griguoli)^e **Ravel** Violin Sonata, Op posth^f **Respighi** Violin Sonata^g **Saint-Saëns** Le carnaval des animaux^h **Shostakovich** Cello Sonata, Op 40ⁱ

abch **Martha Argerich** pf with ^h**Alfred Rutz** fl ^h**Corrado Giuffredi** cl ^h**Andrey Baranov**, ^g**Renaud Capuçon**, ^h**Michael Guttman**, ^d**Alissa Margulis** vn ^h**Lyda Chen** va ^h**Gautier Capuçon**, ^h**Alexandre Debrus**, ^b**Mischa Maisky** vc ^h**Enrico Fagone** db ^e**Carlo Maria**

Griguoli, ^{df}**Jura Margulis**, ^c**Cristina Marton**, ^l**Gabriela Montero**, ^g**Francesco Piemontesi**, ^e**Alessandro Stella**, ^e**Giorgia Tomassi**, ^h**Lilya Zilberstein** pf ^h**Gregorio Di Trapani** perc
^a**Svizzera Italiana Orchestra** / **Hubert Soudant**
Warner Classics © ③ 2564 63122-0 (3h 7' • DDD)
Recorded live at the Progetto Martha Argerich,
Lugano, June & July 2013



Splendid news that one of the annual musical treats from EMI has been

continued by Warner Classics but this selection from the 2013 Festival is a bag of mixed blessings. Whether we need another recording by Argerich of Beethoven's C major Concerto is a moot point. While the freshness and conviction of her concept remain as compelling as ever, she has little different to say about the work from her eight available commercial recordings beyond a few small instances such as her more pronounced left-hand accents in the A minor section. Mischa Maisky joins her in the same composer's G minor Cello Sonata, a work they first recorded together for DG back in 1990. To listen to these two close friends firing off each other in the helter-skelter high spirits of the Rondo is pure delight.

Disc 2 has Renaud Capuçon and Francesco Piemontesi joining forces in Respighi's rarely heard Violin Sonata, with which many will be familiar from Heifetz's 1950 recording. With slightly more relaxed tempi throughout, Capuçon and Piemontesi bring a no less searing intensity to the ravishing *Andante espressivo* second movement. And it is the slow movement of Shostakovich's Cello Sonata, Op 40, that impresses most in Gautier Capuçon and Gabriela Montero's account, though here the mood is one of desolation and despair.

Andrey Baranov, winner of the Queen Elisabeth Competition and here making his Lugano debut, opens the batting on disc 3 with Ravel's posthumously published Violin Sonata in A minor, a student composition written in 1897. It's an attractive enough single movement – there are parts that sound like English-pastoral Vaughan Williams – but lacking the distinctive character of the great Violin Sonata of 30 years later. Debussy rarely features in Argerich's programmes. There's an EMI Japan recording from 1999 of her playing the *Petite Suite* (which I've never heard) and it's good to hear her reviving this in the company of Cristina Marton in a performance that is fine but

unexceptional. What really sets this disc alight are the four movements from the Offenbach-Rosenthal *Gaîté parisienne* ballet suite transcribed by Carlo Maria Griguoli for three pianos (Griguoli himself with Giorgia Tomassi and Alessandro Stella are now firm festival favourites). Audience applause, thankfully retained after all the performances on these discs, here comes with added whoops of delight.

The Can-Can, which rounds off this exuberant world premiere performance, features in 'Tortoises' from *Carnival of the Animals*. Despite the pleasure of hearing the Grand Zoological Fantasy in its original chamber guise for once, this one is woefully dull. 'Tortoises' is so lugubrious that it kills its humorous intent stone dead; the wrong-note-out-of-sync 'Pianists' is a laboured joke beyond wincing; for no reason at all the 'Partant pour la Syrie' section of 'Fossils' suddenly changes tempo from *allegro ridicolo* to *moderato*; and the Swan sounds as if it's heading off for Tuonela. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'The Silver Album'

Beethoven Violin Sonata No 7, Op 30 No 2^a
Brahms Hungarian Dances – No 1^b; No 2^c; No 5^c.
Violin Sonata No 2, Op 100^d **Debussy** Beau soir^c
Fauré Violin Sonata No 1, Op 13^b **Kreisler** Caprice viennois, Op 2^b. Liebesleid^b. Schön Rosmarin^b
Massenet Thaïs – Méditation **Mozart** Violin Sonata No 33, K481^e **Penderecki** La folia
Previn Violin Sonata No 2 **Ravel** Pièce en forme de Habanera
Anne-Sophie Mutter vn **Lambert Orkis** pf
DG © ② 479 2949GM2 (157' • DDD)
From ^a457 619-2GH4 (11/98); ^b471 500-2GH (6/03); ^c445 826-2GH (12/96); ^d477 8767GH (8/10); ^e477 6318GH4 (11/06^h)



'The Silver Album' has been made to mark 'a level of artistic partnership that is

rare, even in the highest echelons of concert performance', and Anne-Sophie Mutter and Lambert Orkis's relationship has indeed spanned 25 years this year, resulting in awards that include Grammys (for their complete Beethoven, in 2000) and *Le Monde de la Musique*'s Choc de l'année (complete Mozart, 2006). It is a collection of recordings old (single examples from those complete Beethoven and Mozart sets, as well as Brahms, Fauré and Kreisler) and new (two world premieres, along with works by Massenet and Ravel) that conflates particularly well to chart the remarkably constant relationship of these two great performers.



Something old, something new, something commissioned and something blue: Anne-Sophie Mutter and Lambert Orkis celebrate 25 years of collaboration

In doing so, though, it does throw up certain questions. Both the Beethoven and Mozart are tricky performances to pin down – it is possible to say that Orkis finishes Mutter's sentences and that they play as a single voice. But it is also easy to say – depending on your mood, or persuasion – that that is actually the good-natured compliance of someone directed not to steal his partner's thunder. It's easier to ignore these issues in pieces either written specifically for Mutter herself (the Previn), world premieres with no comparator (the Penderecki), pieces whose accompaniment are negligible (the Massenet) or even the Ravel, whose fundamental *raison d'être* is to make the top line sound as individual as the human voice. But feeling the disconnection with the kernel of the music is unavoidable in the Fauré, where the complete synthesis of piano and violin of Fauré's intention (as it was in all his musical elements) is absent to the point of frustration in Orkis's kindly modesty and Mutter's forthright tone, even in the statement of material originally presented by the piano. Both here and in the Debussy, everything is far too clear: listen to René Fleming, for instance, singing 'Beau soir' in its original version for voice (Decca), and you will hear her make

all sorts of compromises in order to retain the integrity of the words she is singing, and the culture from which they come.

However the listener chooses to rationalise these questions, it is undeniable that this is a disc of strong identity and integrity. They do also, however, make it one fundamentally for diehard Mutter fans.

Caroline Gill

'Some Other Time'

Barber Cello Sonata, Op 6. Sure on this Shining Night, Op 13 No 3 **Bernstein** Peter Pan – Dream with me. On the Town – Some other time. In our time. Five Anniversaries – No 2, For Lukas Foss. Clarinet Sonata. Seven Anniversaries – No 1, For Aaron Copland **Copland** Old American Songs, Set 1 – Simple Gifts; Long Time Ago **Foss** Capriccio. For Lenny

Zuill Bailey *vc* **Lara Downes** *pf*
Steinway & Sons © STNS30025 (59' • DDD)



Lara Downes says 'this music holds a nostalgia for another time in American music – a golden generation when concert music in America had a real and present place in the culture. Families listened to *Live from the*

Met and watched Bernstein's Young People's Concerts at Carnegie Hall.' You can see what she means, looking back two or three generations later, and this attractive anthology can be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap.

It includes songs without words. The Broadway Bernstein is represented by one song from *On the Town* and two little-known examples – 'In our time', available only recently and never used, would surely have been a hit. Then there's Barber's catchy 'Sure on this shining night', which works well instrumentally with its antiphonal exchanges. His substantial early Cello Sonata, which has become a classic, gets an arresting performance, with Bailey's magisterial tone ably matched by Downes. In contrast, Lukas Foss's pieces are amusing. Then Bailey purloins Bernstein's early Clarinet Sonata and turns it into an idiomatic cello piece. It works – might have been written that way.

The sequencing on the CD is neat – after Foss's pieces we get Bernstein's piano *Anniversary* for Foss; after Bernstein's *Anniversary* for his influential friend Copland we get the latter's arrangements of 'Simple Gifts', with a lingering ending, and 'Long time ago'.

Peter Dickinson

Ferenc Fricsay

Jon Tolansky profiles a conductor whose vividly characterful interpretations of sparkling detail led to a prolific recording career that was tragically cut short at the age of just 48

‘Fricsay was probably the greatest conductor I ever played with. He made a tremendous impression on all of us in just two concerts.’

Peter Poole played in the violin section of the London Philharmonic Orchestra when the Hungarian conductor Ferenc Fricsay was a guest in the first week of December 1961. He had been especially thrilled to take part in performances with conductors of the stature of Pierre Monteux, Charles Munch and Paul Kletzki, but, as he told me for this article, ‘Fricsay stood out from all of them. The rehearsals and concerts I played with him were mesmerising, and I don’t ever recall hearing playing of such intensity, colour and perfectly balanced precision.’

Those concerts were in fact to be Ferenc Fricsay’s final appearances. He had already been afflicted with cancer for many years, and that week, in great pain, he had superhumanly willed himself to energise and inspire the LPO. ‘He could only speak in a whisper, but he magnetised everyone and they hung on every word he said,’ remembers Poole. ‘I’ll never forget the hushed sound he obtained in the slow movement of Bartók’s Second Piano Concerto, which we were performing with Geza Anda. It was astonishing, and actually terrifying to play. I don’t recall anyone before or since who created such a spell-bindingly intense *pianissimo* from an orchestra.’

Fourteen months later Fricsay was dead at just 48 years old – a terrible loss when he had unquestionably already attained high stature as a relatively young man in his profession – a profession that, in those days, was dominated much more by veterans than it is nowadays. The substantial demand for his music-making, personified by performances of vivid characterisation with sparkling detail, striking contrasts of colour, vital rhythmic energy and richly expressive phrasing, had made him a prolific recording artist. Collectors of the day particularly highly prized their luxuriously packaged DG discs of him in a very wide range of music – Bartók, Beethoven, Blacher, Brahms, Falla, Franck,

Hartmann, Honegger, Liebermann, Mahler, Martin, Mozart, Orff, Ravel, Smetana, Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky, Verdi: just some of the composers on the list. The majority of the recordings were with the ensemble that he had worked meticulously hard to mould into an ensemble of outstanding response, homogeneity and tone colour, the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra (formerly the Berlin RIAS Orchestra). But, being a passionate opera lover, there were also important and highly theatrical opera recordings: complete (*Don Giovanni* and *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle*, for instance) and excerpts (such as *Fidelio*). In Germany he had become a stellar figure in the opera house, with music directorships in Berlin

and Munich, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau told me that Fricsay was both a mentor and an inspiration to him at the outset of his operatic career.

But – I wonder how many people reading this are

familiar with Fricsay’s art? DG has reissued a large number of his recordings over the years, yet the conductor is a figure from the distant past now, even to people of my generation who eagerly used to buy his recordings when they first appeared. Perhaps this was because his appearances outside Europe were not too frequent; even among older people, his name does not seem to have survived well outside the realms of connoisseurs. But hopefully this perception will be redressed in this 100th anniversary year of his birth. DG is proud of its Fricsay catalogue and the label is enterprisingly releasing in two instalments the entire DG heritage, including some rarely available material. Forty-five CDs of orchestral music come out this summer and next year the

intention is to bring out a similar-sized box of vocal recordings – choral and operatic. Among this year’s list is a *recherché* item that demonstrates the truly remarkable virtuoso standard of playing that Fricsay used to attain with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. The performance of Rolf Liebermann’s frenetic and feverish *Furioso* is electrifying in its driving rhythm, pin-point articulation and razor-sharp precision.

Another item in the DG centenary box is a

‘Already afflicted with cancer and in great pain, Fricsay had superhumanly willed himself to energise and inspire the LPO’

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1933 – *Early appointment*

Appointed Music Director of the Szeged Philharmonic Orchestra at just 19 years old

•1945 – *First opera house position*

Becomes Principal Conductor at the Budapest Opera

•1947 – *Big break*

Premieres von Einem’s *Danton’s Tod* at the Salzburg Festival, bringing him international recognition

•1948 – *Berlin promotions*

Simultaneously appointed Chief Conductor of the Berlin RIAS (later Berlin Radio) Symphony Orchestra and General Music Director of the Städtische Oper Berlin

•1956 – *Move to Munich*

Appointed Music Director of the State Opera in Munich



Expressive phrasing:
Ferenc Fricsay

rehearsal of Smetana's *Vltava* with the Stuttgart RSO – a uniquely revealing of Fricsay's genius. I have seen this rehearsal, plus the concert following it, on the no-longer-available TDK DVD 'Great Conductors – Ferenc Fricsay' (you may be able to find excerpts on YouTube), and the only word I can find to describe it is riveting. His technical and musical knowledge, captivating artistic imagination and meticulous attention to detail in rehearsal remind me of Carlos Kleiber, while his gestures and control at the concert are, as Peter Poole commented, mesmerising.

Fricsay was born in Budapest a few days after World War I was declared, on August 9, 1914, and died a young man in a hospital at Basle on February 20, 1963, just as The Beatles were soaring to huge fame. Had he lived to a decent old age, he would surely have become internationally more

popular; with developing technology, great artists were seen, as well as heard, in music lovers' homes. And that's why the TDK DVD is such a valuable recording – as is the DG rehearsal disc and, of course, that 'astonishing' collaboration with Anda: all prime sources for discovering the inspiration of Ferenc Fricsay. **G**



THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING

Bartók Piano Concertos Nos 1-3

Géza Anda *pf*

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Ferenc Fricsay

DG (M) 447 399-2GOR (5/95)

Instrumental



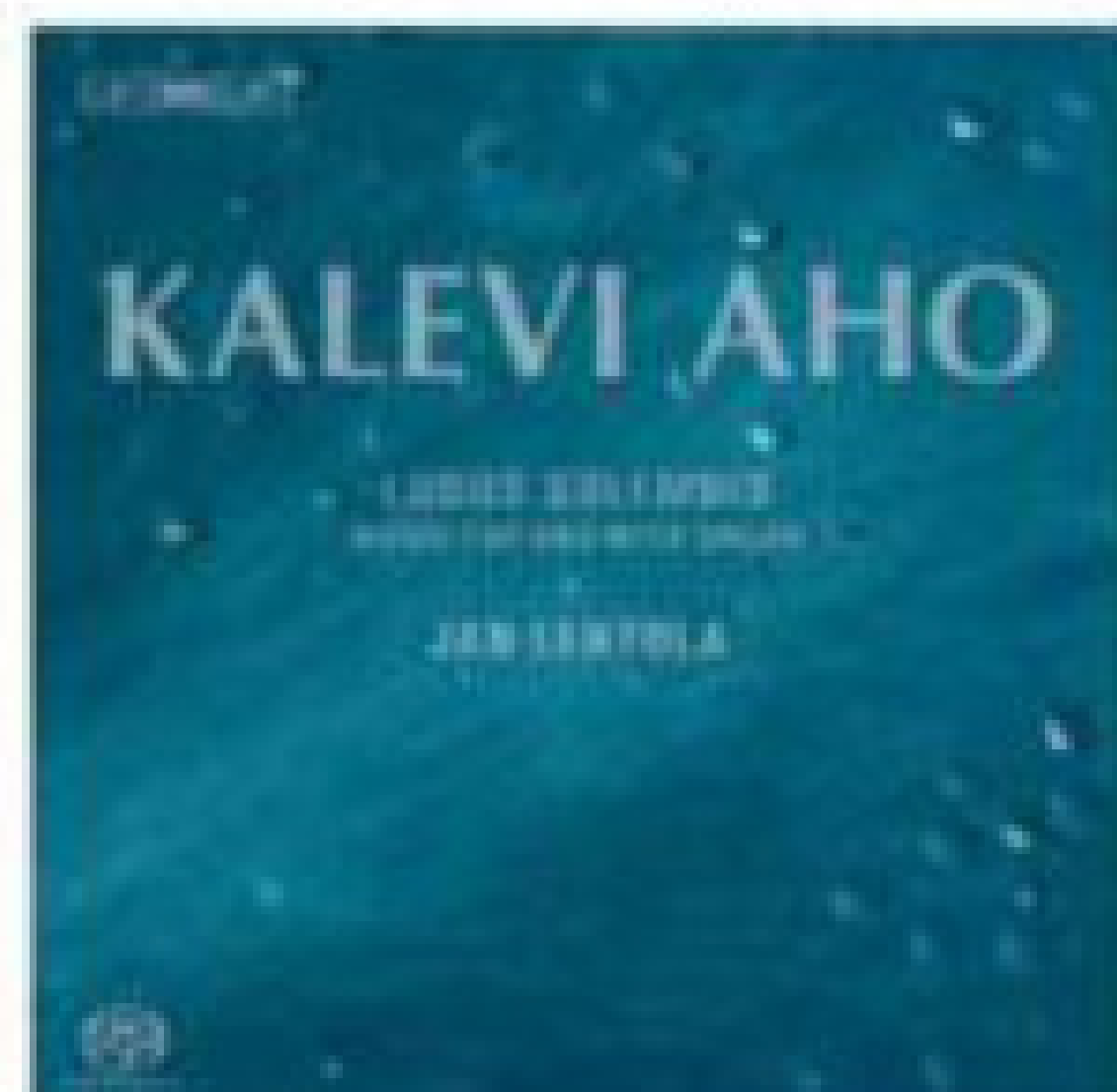
Bryce Morrison reviews a debut recital featuring bold composers:
'Olga Stezhko is blessed with awe-inspiring command and empathy for two dreamers in strange worlds' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**



William Yeoman on an Italian guitarist's Spanish holiday:
'Rustic and refined, intimate and panoramic...you can almost smell the orange blossoms' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**

Aho

Aho Quasi una fantasia^a. Epilogue^b. Wedding March^c – I; II. Wedding Music^c. Ludus solemn^c. In memoriam^c. Song of the Earth^d
JS Bach/Aho Contrapunctus XIV^e
Jan Lehtola *org* with ^a**Anna-Kaisa Pippuri** *ob*
^d**Kaija Saarikettu** *vn* ^a**Petri Komulainen** *hn*
^b**Jussi Vuorinen** *tbn*
BIS BIS1966 (62' • DDD/DSD)
Played on ^{abd}the main organ of St Paul's Church, Helsinki; ^ethe 1998 Porthan organ of Kotka Church, Finland; ^cthe Åkerman & Lund organ of St Johannes Kyrka, Malmö, Sweden



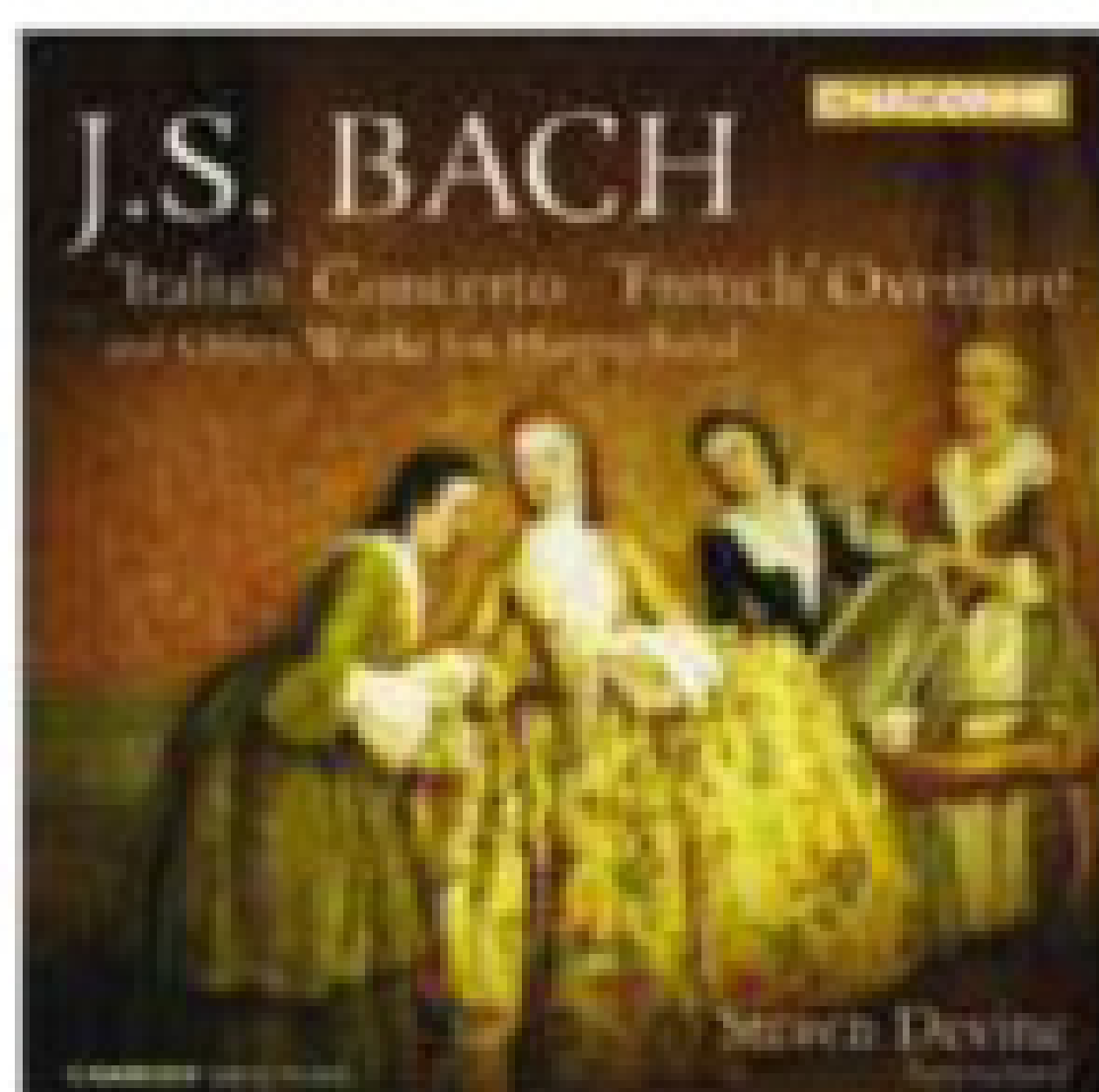
Aho's writing for organ certainly betrays the same ear for instrumental colour as

his orchestral works, and it is refreshing to hear what one might call a 'non-French' approach to the instrument. The writing is springy, the melodic lines clear and athletic, textures uncluttered; the lineage is certainly northern European, and Bach in particular is paid homage to in Aho's remarkable completion of the Contrapunctus XIV from *The Art of Fugue*.

The longest piece here is the austere *Quasi una fantasia* for horn and organ but for me the most impressive works are *Ludus solemn*, whose opening suggests a majestic chorale prelude and then splinters into a sequence of precisely coloured landscapes, exploiting to the full the magnificent Åkerman & Lund organ in St John's church in Malmö, and the elegiac *Laulu maasta* ('Song of the Earth') for violin, oboe and organ. This latter is just under five minutes in length but one feels that it could be expanded into a much longer piece, so engaging is the material and so fascinating the colours produced by this unlikely trio of instruments. There are also simpler, practical pieces here – three wedding marches written at different times, an Epilogue for trombone and organ, and a lovely *In memoriam*. There is clearly more for Aho to say in this field and Lehtola is the man to transmit the message. **Ivan Moody**

JS Bach

Aria variata 'alla maniera italiana', BWV989. Concerto nach italiänischem Gusto, BWV971. Fantasia, BWV906. Fantasia and Fugue, 'Chromatic', BWV903. Overture nach französischer Art, BWV831
Steven Devine *hpd*
Chandos Chaconne CHAN0802 (72' • DDD)



Listeners used to a wild and woolly Bach *Chromatic* Fantasia might find Steven

Devine's italicised phrasing overly studied in the opening section. Follow closely, however, and you'll notice how Bach's harmonic movement governs the harpsichordist's phrasing, and that he's waiting for the improvisatory section to unleash power. If the fugue seems overly deliberate and lacking momentum at first, the basic pulse and interpretative design remain solidly consistent from start to finish. The *Variations in the Italian Style* stand out for Devine's unified tempo relationships between movements and his discreet registrations, while the C minor Fantasia gets an incisive, superbly articulated reading. The *Italian Concerto*'s outer movements get bogged down in agogic stresses and don't really come to life as they surely do in Scott Ross's recording.

Devine is at his best in the *French Overture*. If Ross's bravura sweep evokes a Baroque orchestra, Devine's intimately scaled fingerwork and adroit contrapuntal acumen between the hands place the attractive Colin Booth double manual harpsichord centre stage. The Overture's scales and ornaments particularly showcase Devine's digital independence. He weighs the long notes to telling effect in the Courante, and employs subtle registration changes in the repeats. The Gavottes, Passepieds and Bourées dance off the page with lively rhythmic swagger and delineation. Devine's masterly *legato* fingering brings uncommon linear clarity and transparency to the Sarabande, and the

Echo movement's pronounced dynamic contrasts sound positively modern in their impact, helped by Chandos's warm and detailed sound. **Jed Distler**

Italian Conc, French Ov – selected comparison:
Ross (APEX) 8573 89224-2

JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier, BWV846-893
Frédéric Desenclos *org*
Alpha ALPHA819 (4h 15' • DDD)
Played on the organs of the Oud Katholieke Kerk, The Hague; Église Saint-Vincent, Lyons; Saint-Étienne de Baïgorry, France; Sint-Maartenskerk, Zaltbommel, Netherlands



Recorded between 1998 and 2001, and first released in two

parts a decade ago, these four discs present all 48 Preludes and Fugues on four different organs, two of which can trace their origins to Bach's time; indeed, the organ of the Maartenskerk in Zaltbommel in the Netherlands was originally built (by Verhofstad) the same year that Bach completed Book 1. It used to be argued that since Bach intended *Das wohltemperirte Clavier* as a demonstration of equal temperament and that since organs of his time did not have equal temperament, performance on an organ was inappropriate. However, Bach scholarship has moved on since then and some, at least, were almost certainly conceived as organ music.

Frédéric Desenclos certainly makes a convincing case. The first two from Book 1, played on the charming instrument of the Oud Katholieke Kerk in The Hague – originally built by Garrels in 1726 but substantially now the work of Flentrop in 1994 – are presented as a convincing organ *allegro* and a toccata in the true north German style, while the Fugue of Book 1 No 14, with its long-breathed subject, seems utterly at home on the 1994 Freytag instrument of Saint-

Vincent, Lyons. He also underlines on the Zaltbommel organ the claim he makes in his booklet essay that the Prelude of Book 2 No 19 is 'a worthy adjunct' to the *Duetti* of the *Clavierübung III*.

Where Desenclos fails to make it sound idiomatic is as much down to his marked aversion to anything approaching a *legato* touch as to anything inherent in the music itself. Where a glutinous organ *legato* might seem the perfect way of presenting the Prelude to Book 1 No 22, Desenclos opts for an angular plod, weighed down terminally by a 16-foot manual Principal. Similarly the Fugue subject of Book 2 No 8 is reduced to a series of jabbed pitches, not helped by the rather hoarse sound of the 1999 Mahler organ of the Church of Saint-Étienne de Baïgorry.

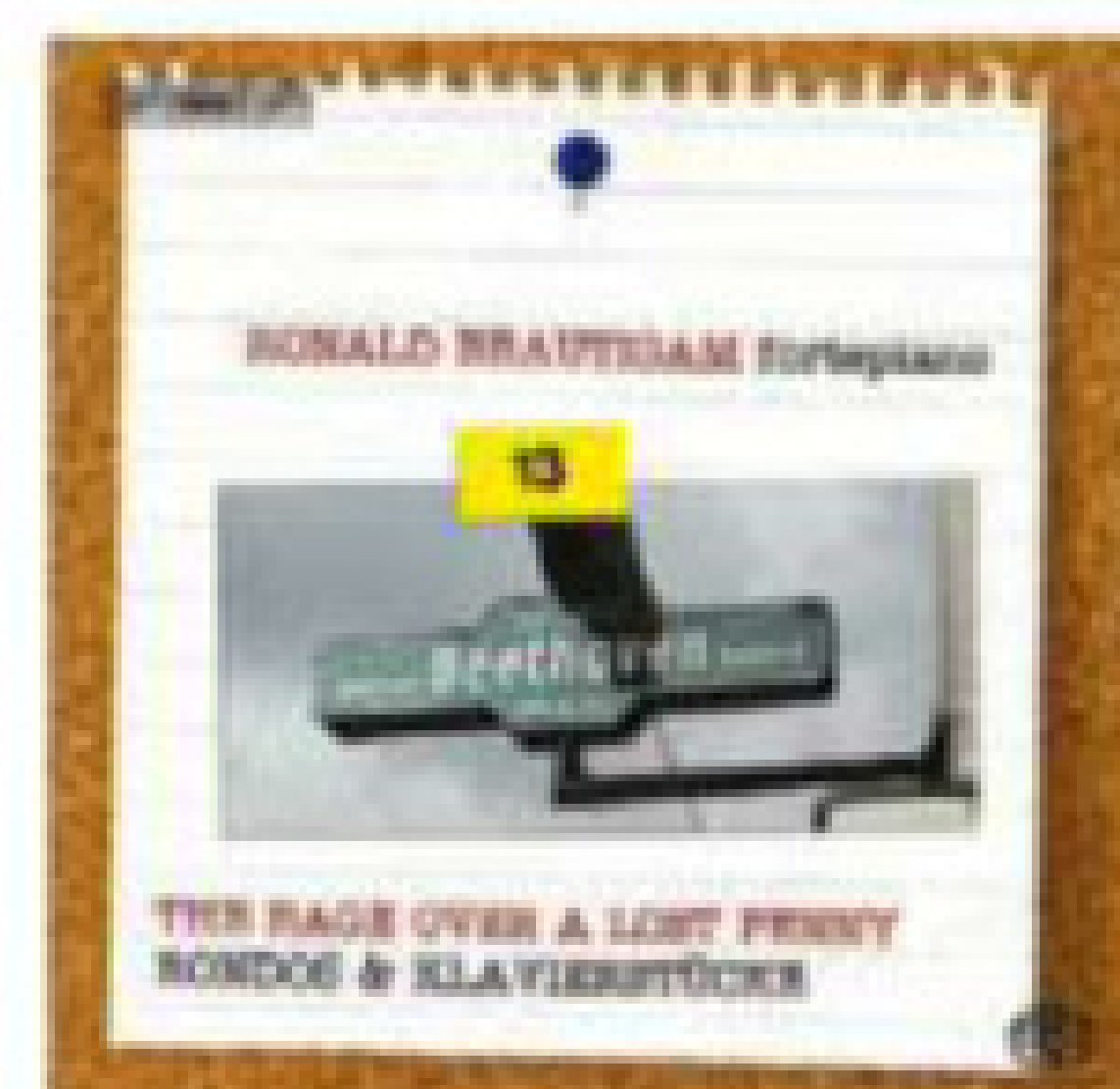
Details of registration are given, not always very clearly, but there is scant information about the organs themselves, while the printed essays seem occasionally confused. The recordings, though, are clear and well balanced, and Desenclos's strict adherence to the printed score is commendable, making no attempt to nudge the music into a more receptive form for performance on the organ. **Marc Rochester**

Beethoven

'Complete Works for Solo Piano, Vol 13: Rondos & Klavierstücke'
Rondos - Op 51 No 1; Op 51 No 2; WoO48; WoO49; Kinsky-Halm *Anh* 6. Rondo a capriccio, 'Rage Over a Lost Penny', Op 129. Ecossaise, WoO86. Six Ecossaises, WoO83. Andante favori, WoO57. Fantasie, Op 77. Polonaise, Op 89. Klavierstück, 'Für Elise'. Andante maestoso, 'Letzter musikalischer Gedanke'

Ronald Brautigam *fp*

BIS (F) BIS1892 (68' • DDD)



Vol 13 of Ronald Brautigam's cycle encompassing Beethoven's complete

solo piano output sheds fresh light on familiar and relatively obscure shorter works. Although the ubiquitous *Für Elise* is familiar via its posthumously published 1867 edition, we hear it in a version edited by Barry Cooper from sketches for a planned revision that Beethoven did not live to complete. It includes a bridge passage between the main A minor theme and the central F major section. An *Andante maestoso* in C major arranged by Anton Diabelli stems from a string quintet sketch wrongly regarded as Beethoven's 'last musical thought' and relates to the tonal and spiritual world of the composer's last quartet. By contrast,

a substantial B flat Rondo credited to Beethoven is of doubtful authorship.

Brautigam's flexible yet well-proportioned tempo fluctuations enliven the C major Rondo, Op 51 No 1, in contrast to its opus-mate in G major's rippling classical poise. The pianist resists the common temptation to unleash the Op 129 *Rondo a capriccio*'s surging textures too loudly too soon, scaling his dynamics so that the dense harmonic activity at the climaxes hits home. Brautigam divines just the right tempo to make the *Six Ecossaises* hop and skip, rather than scurry all over the keyboard, while his instrument's pronounced registral differentiation and short sustaining capability impart revealing timbral diversity in the *Andante favori* and the G minor Fantasia. The C major Polonaise teems with lightness, sparkle and pointed filigree in Brautigam's hands, and he manages to make the C major and A major Rondos Beethoven composed at 12 sound like vital masterpieces. In short, a release that upholds the high artistic and technical standards of its predecessors and more. Will Vol 14 bring us Brautigam's long-awaited *Diabelli* Variations? **Jed Distler**

Beethoven • Chopin • Schubert

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 31, Op 110

Chopin Nocturne No 20, Op *posth*

Schubert Piano Sonata No 21, D960

Menahem Pressler *pf*

BIS (F) BIS1999 (71' • DDD/DSD)



Playing as if before a small late-night audience of friends, Menahem Pressler

gives us a warmth and speculation far removed from a more impersonal concert-hall brio and self-conscious mastery. A measured start to Beethoven's Op 110 Sonata, though with a deft rejoinder in the following arpeggio patterns, leads you into a profoundly lyrical world with a renewed sense of a mystical beyond. His second-movement *Allegro molto* may be less robust and propulsive than from others but in the *Arioso dolente* and most of all in the hushed final appearance of the fugue it would be difficult to imagine a higher degree of inwardness or quietly sustained eloquence.

Much the same virtues apply to the Schubert B flat Sonata, most notably in the second-movement *Andante sostenuto* (though with a strongly affirmative impetus in the central contrast). All this is a far cry from other overly sophisticated versions; never for a moment do you feel the need

to impress with externals. For his encore, Pressler turns to Chopin, and in the posthumous C sharp Nocturne he once more gives you all of his musical radiance. The recorded sound captures the tonal bloom and magic of the playing, making this a memorable issue by a pianist who, despite his age, 90, can hardly be said to be in the autumn of his career. **Bryce Morrison**

Canova da Milano

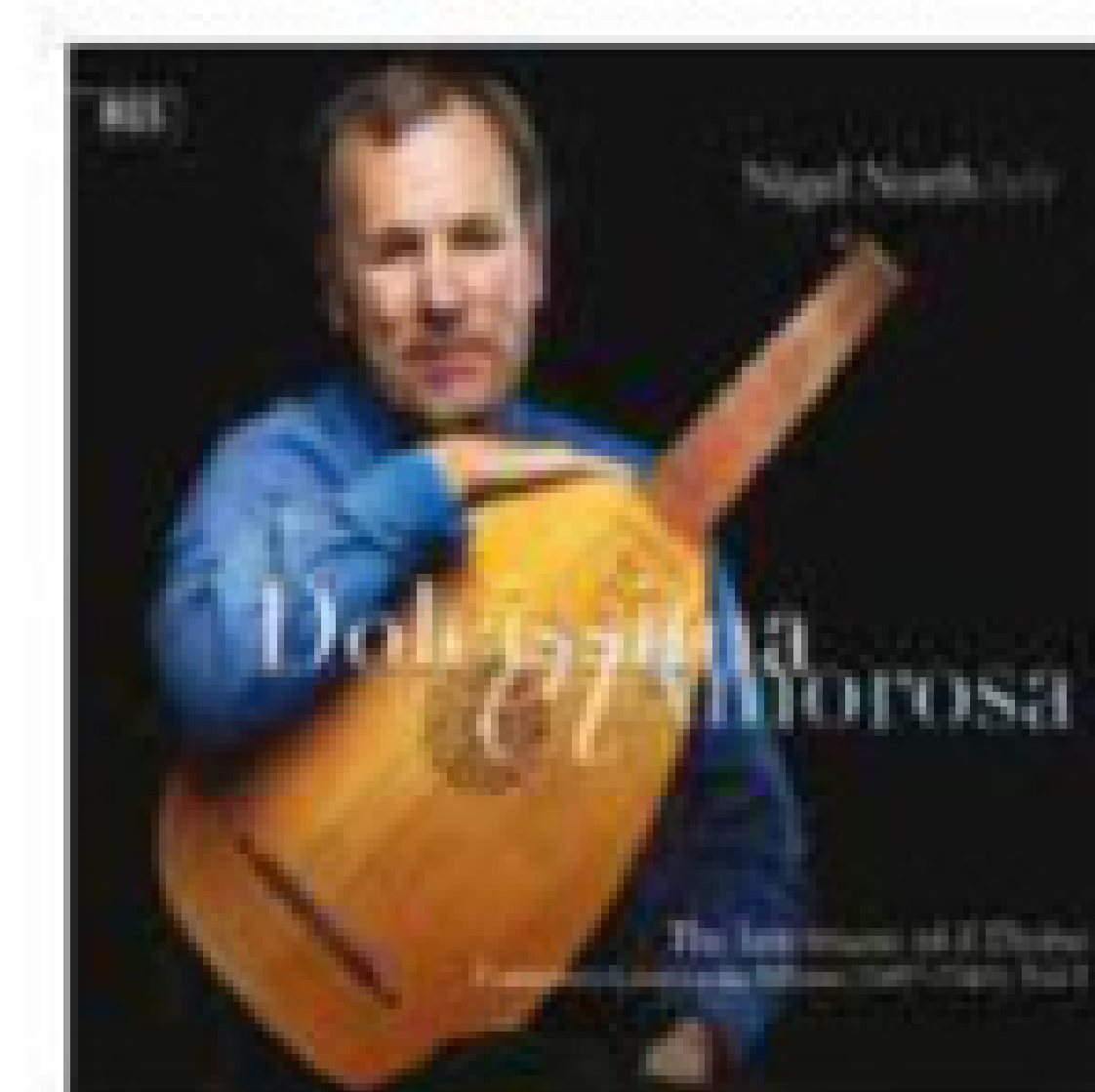
'Dolcissima amorosa -

The Lute Music of Il Divino, Vol 1'

Fantasias and Ricercars

Nigel North *lute*

BGS (F) BGS122 (65' • DDD)



To begin at the end: Paul O'Dette's own tribute (Harmonia Mundi, 7/13) to that

inspired miniaturist of the lute, Francesco Canova da Milano (1497-1543), aka Il Divino, closes with the same two fantasias/ricercars as does fellow lutenist Nigel North's latest release, the first of two volumes North is devoting to the composer. On the surface, their approaches are very different. For example, and only broadly speaking, where O'Dette uses internal agogic accents to heighten expressive potential, North leans more towards allowing a phrase's flow gently to retard as it reaches the still pool of its final tone. But both players arrive at novel ways of grouping these tiny works; both also recognise Milano's rhetorical genius, the way he takes up a single idea and carries it, and therefore the listener, on an undeniably compelling journey.

North, whose playing is perhaps richer but also less focused and more diffuse (though in a good way) than O'Dette's, is especially interesting here, expanding the 'journey' idea while referencing the traditional sonnet sequence to form five groups of (mostly) fantasias by 'final tones, mode or thematic material'. As a result, there are journeys within journeys within journeys, Milano's imitations, transpositions and rhythmic and other transformations revealing kaleidoscopic vistas that spark more and more associations between and among the groups of fantasias. If that makes this recording sound like some kind of drug-induced trip, perhaps on one level it is. But, joking aside, ultimately it's North's intense introspection and empathy that make this thoughtful programme more satisfyingly psychological than psychedelic.

William Yeoman

Chopin

'Mazurka - Researching Chopin'

Mazurkas - Op 6 Nos 1-3; Op 7 Nos 2 & 3;
Op 17 Nos 2 & 4; Op 24 Nos 1, 2 & 4; Op 30 No 4;
Op 33 Nos 1-4; Op 56 No 2; Op 59 No 2;
Op 63 Nos 2 & 3; Op 67 No 4; Op 68 Nos 2-4

Nils Henrik Asheim *pf*

LAWO ⑤ LWC1049 (64' • DDD)



There are some noteworthy and lovely things about this recording. First,

there is the mellow tone of the restored 1830s Collard & Collard square piano, the kind of instrument on which Chopin's mazurkas would have been played in drawing rooms all over Europe. Second, there is a seductive intimacy to Asheim's playing that resonates with the domestic nature of these miniature gems. Third, it is fascinating to hear how the tone quality and short decay of the instrument influence the performance of the music. Asheim uses asynchronised hands and introduces arpeggiated chords at will – much like Chopin is said to have done in his free treatment of his own work (Berlioz, Lenz, Hallé and many others attest to this).

There are also less appealing aspects. One good reason why people don't make square wooden-framed pianos any more is that they do not have the versatility, colour range or depth of tone of a modern piano. Once one's ear has adjusted to the timbre of the Collard, there is, after a handful of Mazurkas, too little dynamic variation from one to another beyond the aforementioned mellow piano and an almost strident *forte* which seems to emanate from a different tonal palette. Then there is the question of hearing 23 short pieces in the same metre one after the other, many of them using similar figurations and themes. In this instance, best to hear a few at a time.

The booklet, incidentally, with a densely argued essay on the Mazurkas and their performance practice, has a (blurred) 1847 daguerreotype of Chopin (not the famous one of 1849 said to be the only 'photograph' of the composer). What, I wonder, is its provenance?

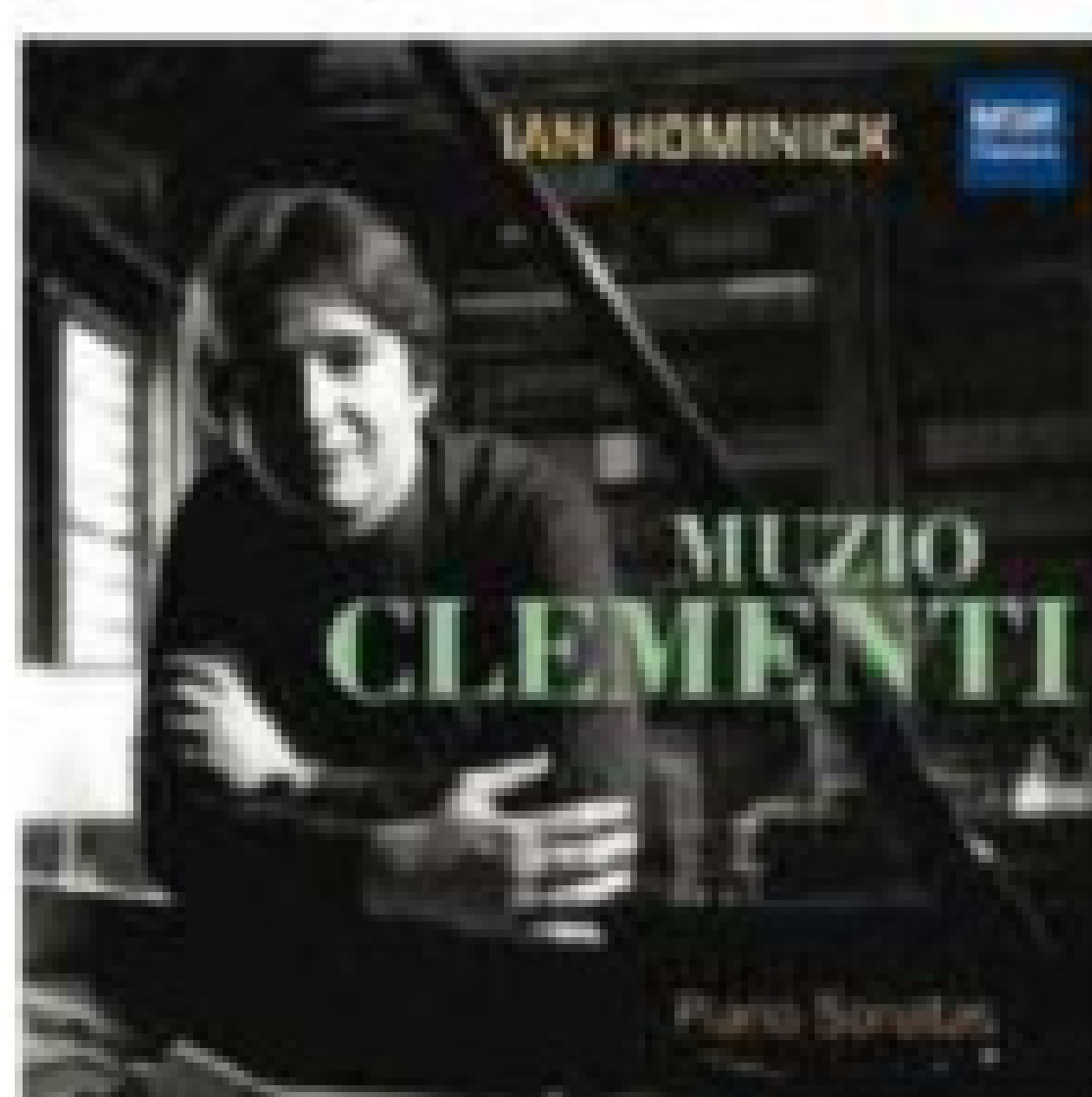
Jeremy Nicholas

Clementi

Piano Sonatas - Op 7 No 3; Op 8 No 1; Op 13 No 6;
Op 37 No 2. Sonata quasi concerto, Op 33 No 3

Ian Hominick *pf*

MSR Classics ⑤ MS1475 (76' • DDD)



Although Muzio Clementi's prolific sonata output rarely figures in the concert

hall, it has certainly proliferated on CD over the past two decades. As a result, the Canadian pianist Ian Hominick faces formidable recorded competition. His interpretations are sensitive, stylistically aware yet somewhat small-scale, which may have something to do with the WFMT Studio's slightly drab ambience. Compare his fluidly easy-going way with the finale of the F minor Sonata, Op 13 No 6, to the wider dynamic range and more volatile expressive palette in Maria Tipo's comparably paced traversal, or else sample Hominick's thoughtful yet held-back account of the *Presto* of the G minor Sonata, Op 8 No 1, next to Tipo's bracing drama and colouristic variety and you'll understand what I mean.

He brings appreciable power to the *Sonata quasi concerto's Allegro con spirito* and underlines the *Adagio's* gentle dissonances with the tiniest of pedal blurs. Unfortunately his prosaic, square-toed *Presto* never catches fire in the manner of Horowitz's admittedly contrived yet far more characterful 1980 live recording. In the *Presto* of the G minor Sonata, Op 7 No 3, Hominick's passagework falls just short of Howard Shelley's decisive solidity, while his capable left-hand octaves are less shapely and incisive compared to Shelley. Yet in contrast to Shelley's animated, generously phrased *Cantabile e lento*, Hominick's steady deliberation creates a more austere contrapuntal clarity that holds attention from first to last. The G major Sonata, Op 37 No 2, stands out for Hominick's excellent detached articulation and supple double notes in the *Allegro moderato* finale. Succinct and informative annotations by Andrea Lamoreaux round out this release. **Jed Distler**

Op 13 No 6, Op 8 No 1 – selected comparison:

Tipo (2/94) (EMI) 754766-2

Op 7 No 3 – selected comparison:

Shelley (5/08) (HYPE) CDA67632

Sonata quasi concerto – selected comparison:

Horowitz (SONY) 88697 88409-2

Janáček

'Complete Works for Piano'

Tema con variazioni (Variations for Zdenka).

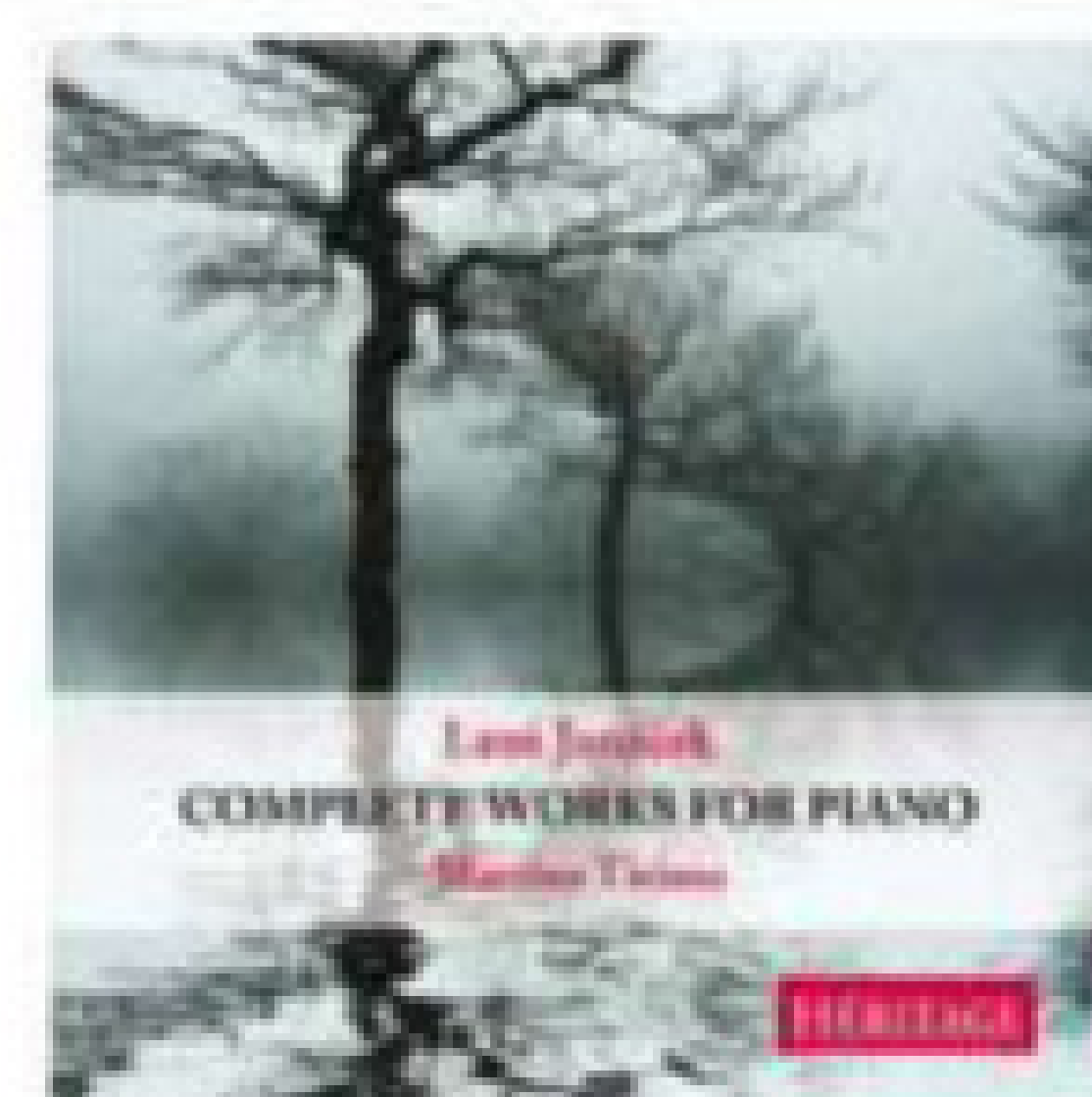
In the Mist. A Recollection. Sonata 1.X.1905.

Three Moravian Dances. On an Overgrown Path

Martino Tirimo *pf*

Heritage ② HTGCD264/5 (111' • DDD)

Recorded 2003. From QTZ2023



This invaluable two-CD album of Janáček's complete piano music includes a short and

personal essay by Martino Tirimo. There he tells us 'there is no other musical expression like Janáček's. When you hear it you recognise it. It is a testimony to his greatness.' He continues: 'I can't help but love it.' This is touchingly expressed and yet it is difficult to imagine what it must be like to be immersed in such a special and challenging project. Challenging because, like much of Mozart or the openings of Beethoven's Fourth Concerto and Chopin's Fourth Ballade, to take some random examples, there is proof that simple things are the most demanding. More subjectively, and like late Fauré (his Seventh Prelude's stammering progression) or Brahms (the E flat minor Intermezzo from Op 118), there is an expression of pain that little can assuage.

What is entirely distinctive, however, is that there is more bitterness than sweetness expressed with rare economy. Much of Janáček's writing recreates a quiet and despairing world – though with angry interjections – almost too private for articulation and with significant biographical associations. The two-movement Sonata is of a frightening candour, its tragic expression a lament for the death of a Czech worker killed in a demonstration but also a reminder of Janáček's deeply troubled state of mind. Even the *Three Moravian Dances* have a forced, offbeat quality, while *On an Overgrown Path* (Part 1) contains titles such as 'Words Fail', 'Unutterable Anguish' and 'In Tears', which tell their own tale. Part 2 is perhaps significantly without titles. *In the Mists*, too, counters the more conventional world of the early Theme and Variations with its sense of a journey from innocence to experience. The spectre of Chopin haunts No 4, while No 5 reminds us of 'Polnisch' from Liszt's *Christmas Tree Suite*, itself a ghostly memory of Chopin. Finally, Tirimo's performances could hardly be more scrupulous, sensitive and committed; though I should add that listeners who know a world of isolating grief will find a resonance in page after page of Janáček's desolating poetry. **Bryce Morrison**

Mendelssohn

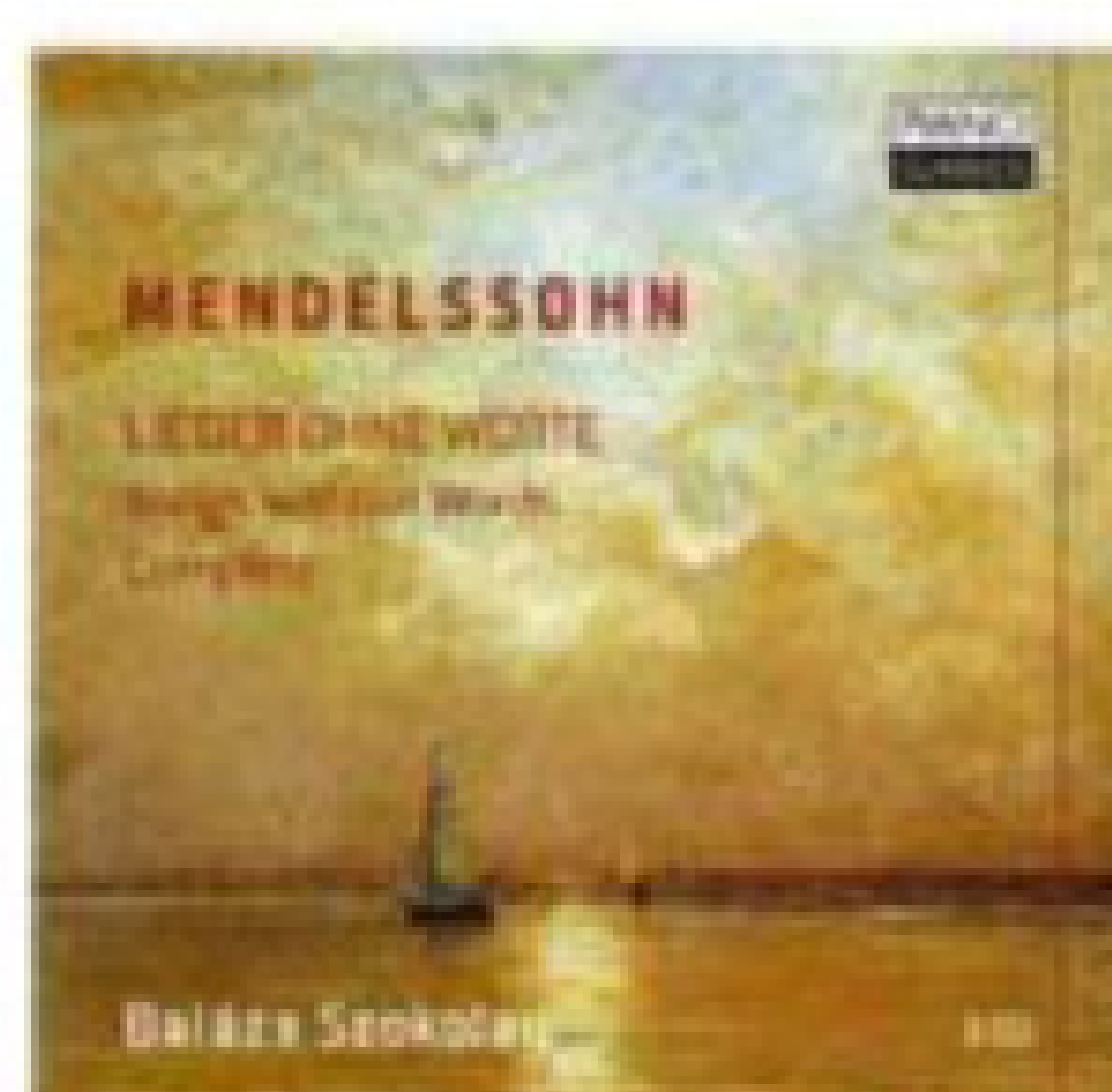
Complete Songs Without Words

Balázs Szokolay *pf*

Piano Classics ② PCLD0067 (114' • DDD)



Chopin squared: Nils Henrik Asheim and the restored 1830 Collard & Collard square piano heard on his new disc of the composer's Mazurkas



Though rarely heard in concert these days – more's the pity – Mendelssohn's

Songs Without Words have delighted generations of amateurs and, at some point in their careers, most of the great pianists...at least, a selection of them. That is how they were intended to be heard. As an *intégrale*, the same figurations and cadences crop up repeatedly, and the melodies of the best-known ones occasionally seem to have been recycled for less familiar titles. Best to cherry-pick. Who would be without Ignaz Friedman's 1930 selection of nine (Naxos) or, in a different vein, the 17 Walter Giesecking recorded in 1956 shortly before his death (EMI)? Sebastian Knauer (Berlin Classics, 3/09) and Nikita Magaloff (Accord) also offer superbly played selections on their Mendelssohn recital discs.

But I seem to have wandered, much as my attention did during this succession of all 49 numbers (Szokolay includes 'Reiterlied' in D minor, without opus number) played in an order of the pianist's own choosing. Szokolay, a polished,

unshowy technician, works his way through the volumes in dependable fashion choosing more judicious tempi than Daniel Barenboim with his impatient *andantes* in his 1973 chronologically ordered cycle (DG) but with none of his personality and subtle touches. Unfair, perhaps, to compare Szokolay and Friedman but, as an illustration of two different worlds, in Op 38 No 6 'Duetto' is to hear a pretty piano piece competently played by one, and two singers (baritone and mezzo) magically accompanied by a third party played by the other. Szokolay does not manage to enter into that realm of imagination. In summary, his is a good enough (and well-recorded) version for completists but no competition for select-ists. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Rachmaninov

Piano Sonatas – No 1, Op 28; No 2, Op 36.

Preludes, Op 23 – No 4; No 5; No 6

Xiayin Wang *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10816 (66' • DDD)



The more I hear of Xiayin (pronounced 'Sha-eeen') Wang, the more I think Chandos

has landed an exceptional artist. Not yet as well known as Yuja Wang, Xiayin is surely destined for similar stellar treatment. Four out of four superb discs in succession is no mean achievement: a trio of American concertos (which I welcomed in December 2013), an exhilarating programme of Earl Wild's piano music (7/14), a Rachmaninov recital (an Editor's Choice in September 2012) and now this second one dedicated to a composer with whom she has an innate affinity.

The First Sonata, magnificent though it is, is by no means as accessible for the listener or player as its better-known successor – it is generally reckoned to be one of the most technically challenging sonatas in the repertoire – but I have rarely heard its multi-layered writing so clearly or more powerfully delivered than here. Xiayin Wang unleashes the full sonority of the instrument in the wild outer movements but finds a touching lyrical grace in the central 'Gretchen' movement.

She is no less successful in the revised version of the B flat minor Sonata. Could she have benefited from just one more take of the final pages? While more thrilling and crisply articulated than either Earl Wild or Nicolai Lugansky, she does not quite match Denis Matsuev's ecstatic

peroration – and I feel she could have. In between the two sonatas come three of the Op 23 Preludes, the dreamy Nos 4 and 6 with the famous G minor Prelude in the middle, a match for Richter's famous recording. And that's saying something.

Jeremy Nicholas

Pf Son No 2 – selected comparisons:

Lugansky (12/12) (NAIV) AM208

Wild (IVOR) IC78002

Matsuev (RCA) 88697 15591-2

Prelude, Op 23 No 5 – selected comparison:

Richter (8/87) (DG) 419 068-2GGA

Ravel

Gaspard de la nuit. Ma Mère l'Oye.

Pavane pour une infante défunte.

Valses nobles et sentimentales

Vanessa Wagner *pf*

Aparté (F) AP062 (63' • DDD)



Vanessa Wagner's inclusion of the solo version of *Ma Mère l'Oye* is a nice touch

which sets this Ravel recital apart from the myriad other versions. She plays a Yamaha, which perhaps lends itself less well than a Steinway to Ravel's colourscape, though it is an aid to clarity, not least in the fast repeated notes that bedevil 'Scarbo'. This is a notably broad reading of *Gaspard*, the central movement particularly drawn out (two and a half minutes longer than Argerich's live 1978 Concertgebouw reading). Bavouzet, Tharaud and Osborne gain in atmosphere by being just that bit tauter than Wagner; she does, though, find a good degree of caprice in 'Scarbo', although others are more malevolent.

There are good things in the faster numbers of *Valses nobles* and she manages to convey the vigour of the opening without becoming percussive. But turn to *Volodos* in his live Vienna recital and the work is lifted to another level, particularly in the more ethereal numbers.

On the whole, Wagner is most convincing in the faster music; in slower numbers her *rubato* is arguably over-generous. 'Le jardin féérique' is one instance, the opening of the suite another (I'm no purist: I have a weakness for the naughty but nice arrangement of this suite for two pianos and percussion). That's something that particularly afflicts the *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, a piece that Osborne and Bavouzet in their different ways realise much more effectively.

Harriet Smith

Pf Wks – selected comparisons:

Tharaud (1/04) (HARM) HMC90 1811/12

Osborne (4/11) (HYPE) CDA67731/2

Bavouzet (MDG) MDG604 1190-2

Valses nobles et sentimentales – selected comparison:

Volodos (6/10) (SONY) 88697 56887-2

Gaspard de la nuit – selected comparison:

Argerich (2/01) (EMI) 557101-2

Ma Mère l'Oye – selected comparison:

Argerich, Freire, Sadlo, Gugges

(10/94) (DG) 477 9523GM3

Scriabin • Busoni

Busoni *Sonatina seconda, K259. Toccata, K287*

Scriabin *Two Dances, Op 73. Five Preludes,*

Op 74. Piano Sonata No 6, Op 62

Olga Stezhko *pf*

Luminum (M) 1421011 (43' • DDD)



What to choose for your debut album? Do you play music that is, quite simply, close to

your heart, or do you come up with something novel and arresting? For Belarus-born Olga Stezhko there is no problem. She clearly has the best of both worlds, making a masterly conjunction out late Scriabin and Busoni, two of music's truest originals. And in her assertive and compulsively readable notes, she has few hesitations. For her 'every composition on this CD is a masterpiece', and she advises us to listen to the whole in order to comprehend fully 'an evocation narrative on your senses and imagination'. Again, late Scriabin is 'simultaneously dark and enlightening, aloof and immediate – a transformation of human reason'. She has similar praise for Busoni, who continues Scriabin's compulsive world, though in a style entirely his own.

All this is complemented by Stezhko, who is blessed with an awe-inspiring command of both idioms and total empathy for two dreamers in strange worlds. Instructions such as *étrange, ailée, souffle mystérieux* and *onde caressant* are hardly eccentric to Stezhko but show a reaching-out into starry new territory rather than leading down an obscure garden path. She takes Busoni's Toccata by storm (for Alfred Brendel, 'probably technically the most difficult piece that I have ever tried') and her way with the Scriabin Preludes is entirely authentic. Not a record for the faint-hearted but rather for those who enjoy dark and menacing regions of the mind. This is an outstanding debut, finely recorded by Luminum Records.

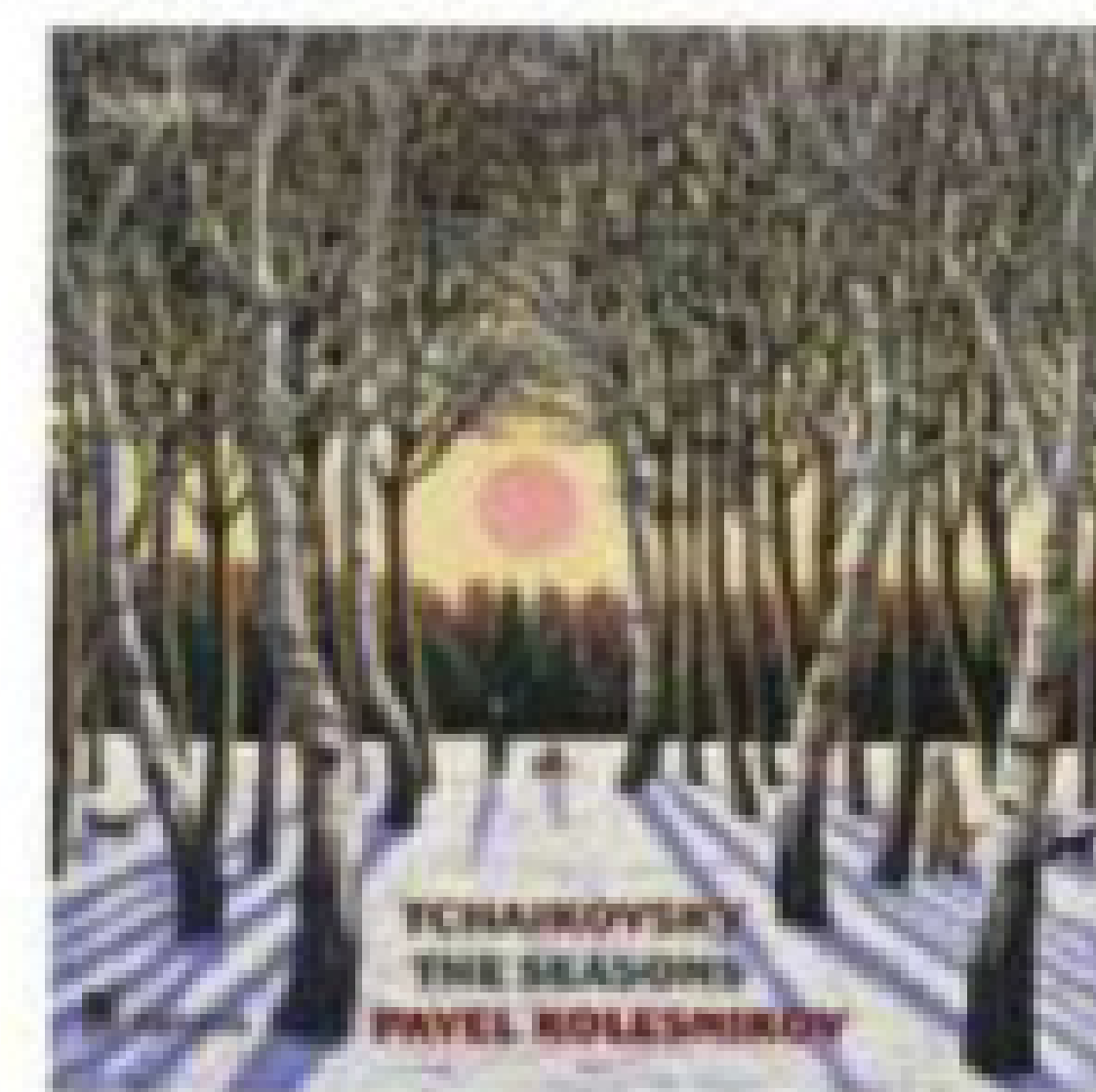
Bryce Morrison

Tchaikovsky

The Seasons, Op 37b. Six Morceaux, Op 19

Pavel Kolesnikov *pf*

Hyperion (F) CDA68028 (76' • DDD)



After a long fallow period, the competition arena has at last

produced pianists of the calibre of Pavel Kolesnikov and Federico Colli (see page 67). Kolesnikov's triumph in Canada's Honens Competition is celebrated by Hyperion with a Tchaikovsky recital of such musical quality that it makes you challenge the composer's dim view of his piano works.

Admittedly *The Seasons* and the *Six Morceaux*, Op 19, are gems in an uneven offering; but if Tchaikovsky had heard Kolesnikov's performances, of the most glowing and delectable pianism, he would surely have retracted his view. Fluid, fine-tuned and with formidable power and dexterity when required, all these performances recreate Tchaikovsky's idiom, whether vivacious or drenched in Russian melancholy to rare degree. Kolesnikov captures all of August's chase through the summer heat, and he is thrillingly away with the horns and the hounds in September's hunt. His way with October ('Chant d'automne') is hauntingly beautiful and he makes you long for rather than regret every repetition in December, most seductive of white-tie-and-tails ballroom waltzes.

There is even greater success in Op 19. What command in the central *Allegro vivacissimo* of 'Capriccioso' or in the 'Thème original et variations', where Tchaikovsky pays tribute to his beloved Schumann; to the *Etudes symphoniques* in particular. On this showing Kolesnikov is already a master pianist and Hyperion has captured all the bloom of his magical sonority. He has also provided a personal and affecting essay where he recalls his own Russian roots. **Bryce Morrison**

Ysaÿe

Solo Violin Sonatas, Op 27

Tianwa Yang *vn*

Naxos (B) 8 572995 (74' • DDD)



The six Solo Violin Sonatas of Eugène Ysaÿe were written for the six great violin virtuosos of his day: Szigeti, Thibaud, Enescu, Kreisler, and the less well known Mathieu Crickboom and Manuel Quiroga.



Vanessa Wagner and her Yamaha: caprice and vigour in Ravel but is her rubato over-generous?

They are still held close to the hearts of violinists who seek to defeat the technical challenges that often see them commandeered for flashy performances by prodigies not ready to apprehend their full depth. To that end, the best recordings are usually those that sense the imminent threat latent in the relationship between the Bach that is either referenced or directly quoted, and Ysaÿe's own decaying version of it. Bach haunts these sonatas, rather than inhabits them, and so to approach them in a wholly emotional way, as Yang does, may be considered by some to miss the inherent creepiness that makes them so overwhelmingly effective.

But that is to air and then put to one side any potentially negative points about what is a display of remarkable playing. As is absolutely necessary with these pieces, the tuning is perfect, and it is a mature, assertive and compelling performance that honours these sonatas as much more than the study pieces they are often labelled. Each sonata is distinctly of its own character: the sinuous playing she displays in Sonata No 4 for Fritz Kreisler (holding in mind the masculine del Gesù violin he was playing at the time of this work's composition), for instance, is more subtly wrought in Sonata No 3 for the complex

George Enescu. It is a beautifully polished recording, with the only element playing against it being the existence of the superlative versions of Tai Murray and Thomas Zehetmair.

Caroline Gill

Selected comparisons:

Zehetmair (1/05) (ECM) 472 6872

Murray (5/12) (HARM) HMU90 7569

Federico Colli

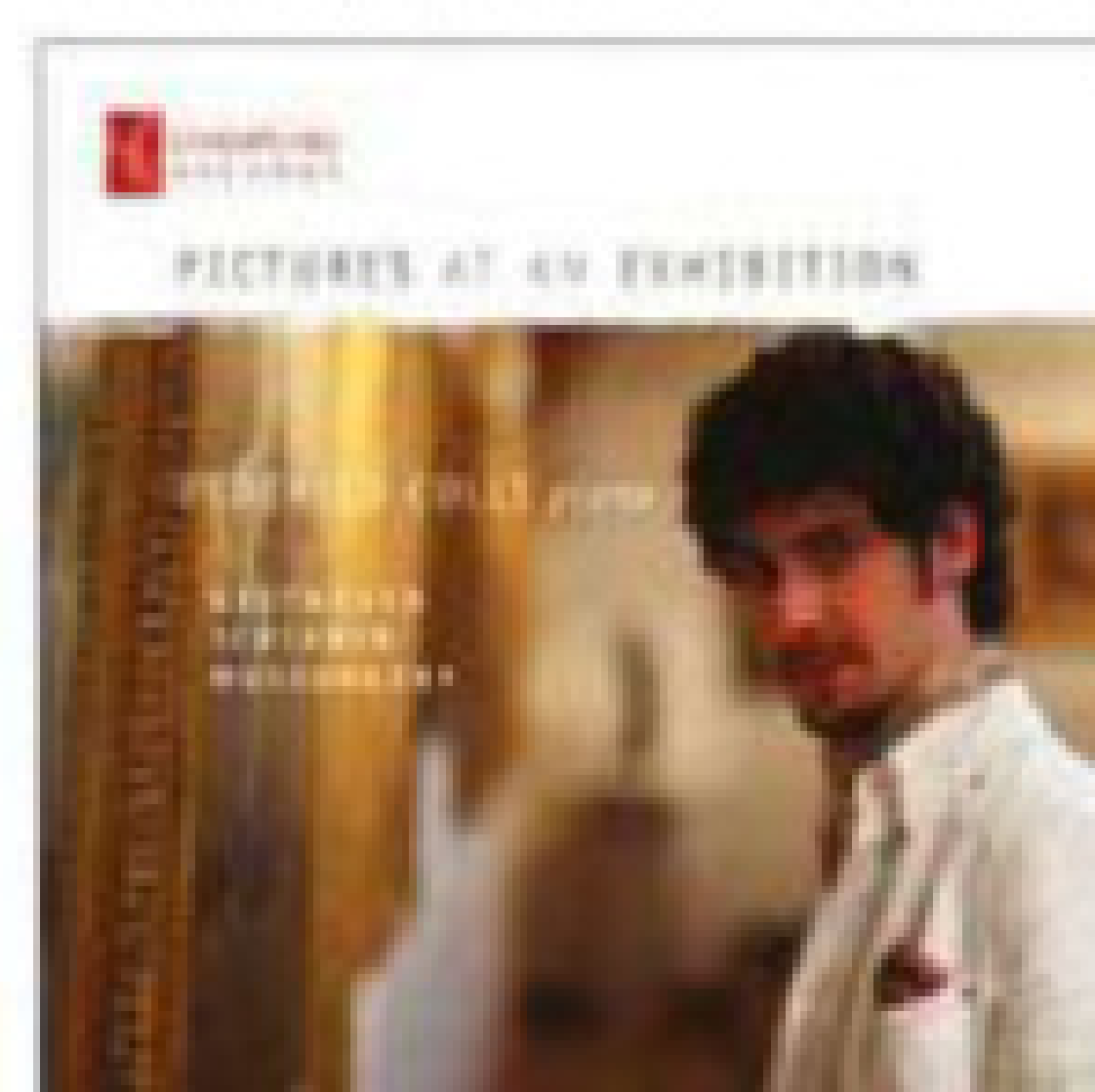
Beethoven Piano Sonata No 23, 'Appassionata',

Op 57 **Mussorgsky** Pictures at an Exhibition

Scriabin Piano Sonata No 10, Op 70

Federico Colli *pf*

Champs Hill © CHRC079 (75' • DDD)



It is now an embarrassing number of years since 'the Leeds'

produced a winner of the calibre of Federico Colli. Entirely individual, he nonetheless takes you back to the far-off days of Lupu and Perahia when Leeds struck temporary gold. And now, after his dazzling QEH recital, which included an audaciously free way with Schumann's First Sonata, comes Colli's first CD, a

serious programme through Beethoven, Scriabin and Mussorgsky.

The recording studio may provide a cooling agent for Colli's vivid and intense personality. But if I missed some of the sheer charisma of his recital, I can only celebrate a crystalline brilliance and translucence that takes you to the heart of everything he plays. He leaves obvious flamboyance to others and if his special stamp is everywhere, it is always in the service of the composer. His Scriabin is a marvel of clarity and refinement, with every strand of the composer's convoluted, multi-strand argument illuminated from within. In Mussorgsky there is none of, say, Pogorelich's heavily worn idiosyncrasy or Horowitz's monstrous if awe-inspiring inflation. There is naturalness combined with the strongest personal projection. This is a finely recorded album and there will doubtless be much more to come.

Bryce Morrison

'Dance of Shadows'

Piazzolla Etude tanguistique No 2

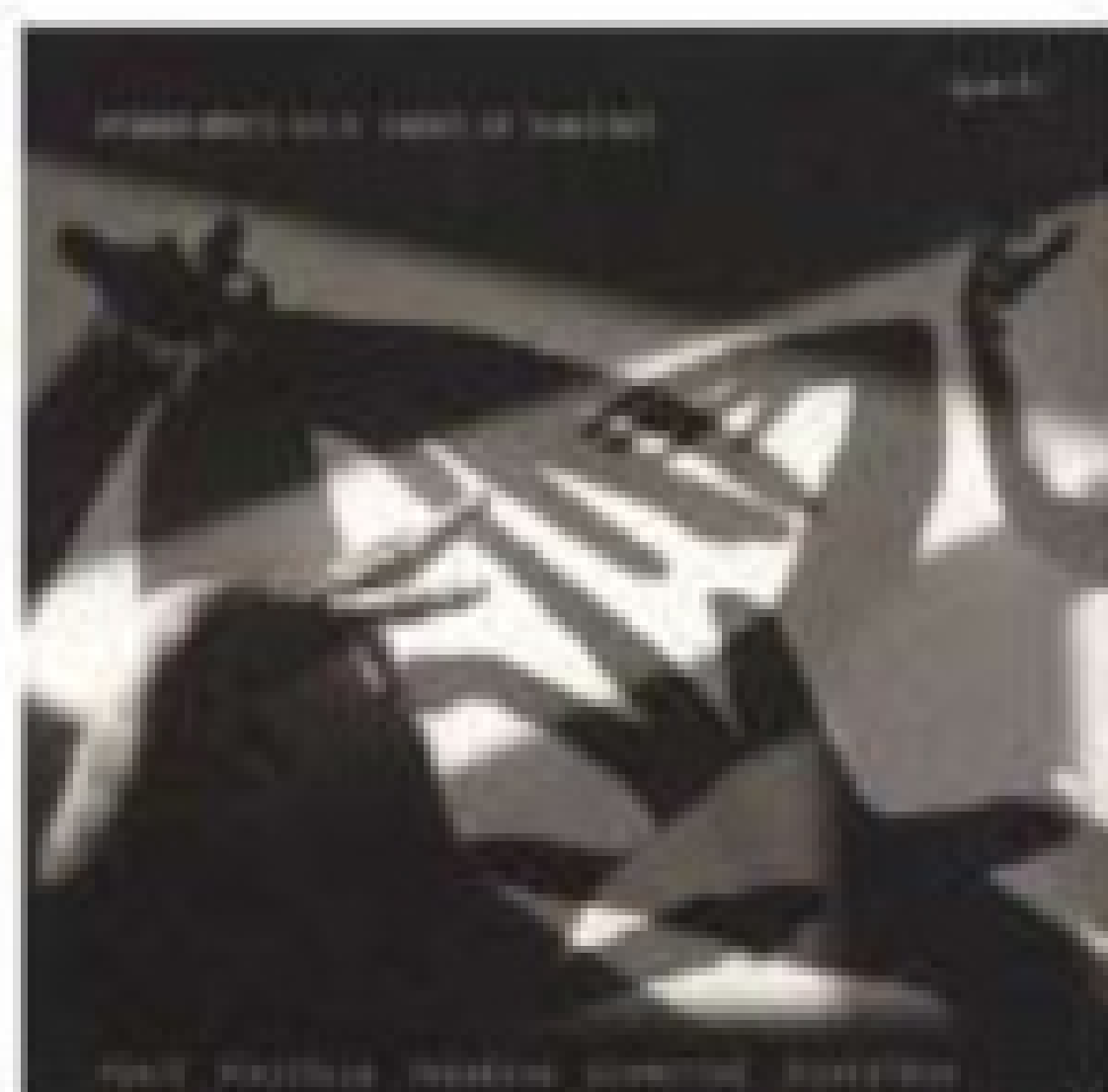
Schnittke A Paganini **Silvestrov** Postlude

Tabakova Spinning a Yarn

Ysaÿe Solo Violin Sonata, Op 27 No 2

Roman Mints *vn*

Quartz © QTZ2103 (58' • DDD)



Roman Mints declares in the booklet-note that 'we have reached

a point where new recordings of mainstream repertoire are basically of interest only to the performers themselves, and their hard-core fans'. It's a strange argument – if those in Brahms's time can only have hoped to hear, say, his symphonies a couple of times in their lifetime and now we can hear them whenever we want, surely as many opportunities to hear different performances is more appropriate than it ever has been?

By his own argument, Mints may have nothing new to offer in, for instance, his performance of the Ysaÿe that Tai Murray didn't offer in her astonishing complete recording of 2011. But it's an excellent performance nonetheless: there are flashes of extraordinary playing – the runs in the final two movements of the Ysaÿe, in particular, and Schnittke's elegantly ironic *A Paganini* – and to set the disc up in the terms he has needlessly raises the expectations of the listener from satisfying musical encounter to life-changing musical experience. Listen to this as a disc by a great violin virtuoso, though, who is reassuringly at home in the difficult repertoire he presents here, and it is not in the least disappointing. Indeed, there is much to recommend it – the perfect tuning, poise and control that glide through the multitude of styles that Schnittke uses to evoke the mercurial Paganini, and the second of the six *Etudes tanguistiques* for violin (or flute) in particular.

Caroline Gill

Ysaÿe – selected comparison:

Murray (5/12) (HARM) HMU90 7569

'España'

Albéniz Capricho catalan, Op 65 No 5. Suite española, Op 47 – Asturias; Sevilla. Torre bermeja, Op 92 No 12 **Falla** El Amor brujo – Danza ritual del fuego. Homenaje, pour le tombeau de Claude Debussy. Romance del pescador. El sombrero de tres picos – Danza del molinero **Mompou** Suite compostelana **Segovia** Estudio sin luz **Tórroba** Castillos de España – No 1, Turgano; No 5, Alcañiz; No 6, Sigüenza; No 8, Alcázar de Segovia. Torrija **Turina** Fandanguillo, Op 36. Sevillana **Edoardo Catemario** *gtr* Decca/Discovery © 476 3935 (76' • DDD)



Listening to this, the Italian-born guitarist Edoardo Catemario's tribute to the

repertoire that caused him to fall in love with the guitar and with Spain, it's not so much the variety of tone but the spacious phrasing that immediately brings Segovia to mind. And no wonder: it was a recording of Segovia playing Tórroba which an impressionable five-year-old Catemario wore out as he played it over and over and over. Thus, he says, 'In my childhood memories the guitar and Spain are one and the same'.

Catemario's repertoire is broad and deep, stretching from the Baroque to the avant-garde; he also performs Romantic music on original instruments with considerable facility – witness his fine recordings of the guitar concertos of Mauro Giuliani (Arts, 2/06). So he can be forgiven for indulging himself by offering up such oft-recorded works as Albéniz's 'Sevilla' and 'Asturias' (here in Segovia's arrangement), Falla's 'Miller's Dance' and Tórroba's *Torrija* – especially when they are played with such obvious affection and élan.

Recordings of Tórroba's *Castillos de España* (how lovingly Catemario awakes the sleeping princess in the nostalgia-filled 'Sigüenza') and Mompou's *Suite compostelana* (how many guitarists so successfully manage the subtle drama of the opening toccata-like 'Preludio' or the blend and balance of voices in the deceptively simple 'Coral?') are of course always welcome. But what really clinches the deal for me here is Catemario's muscular, vividly orchestrated *Fandanguillo* and *Sevillana* by Turina, by turns rustic and refined, intimate and panoramic. You can almost taste the olives and smell the orange blossom. **William Yeoman**

'If you could read my mind'

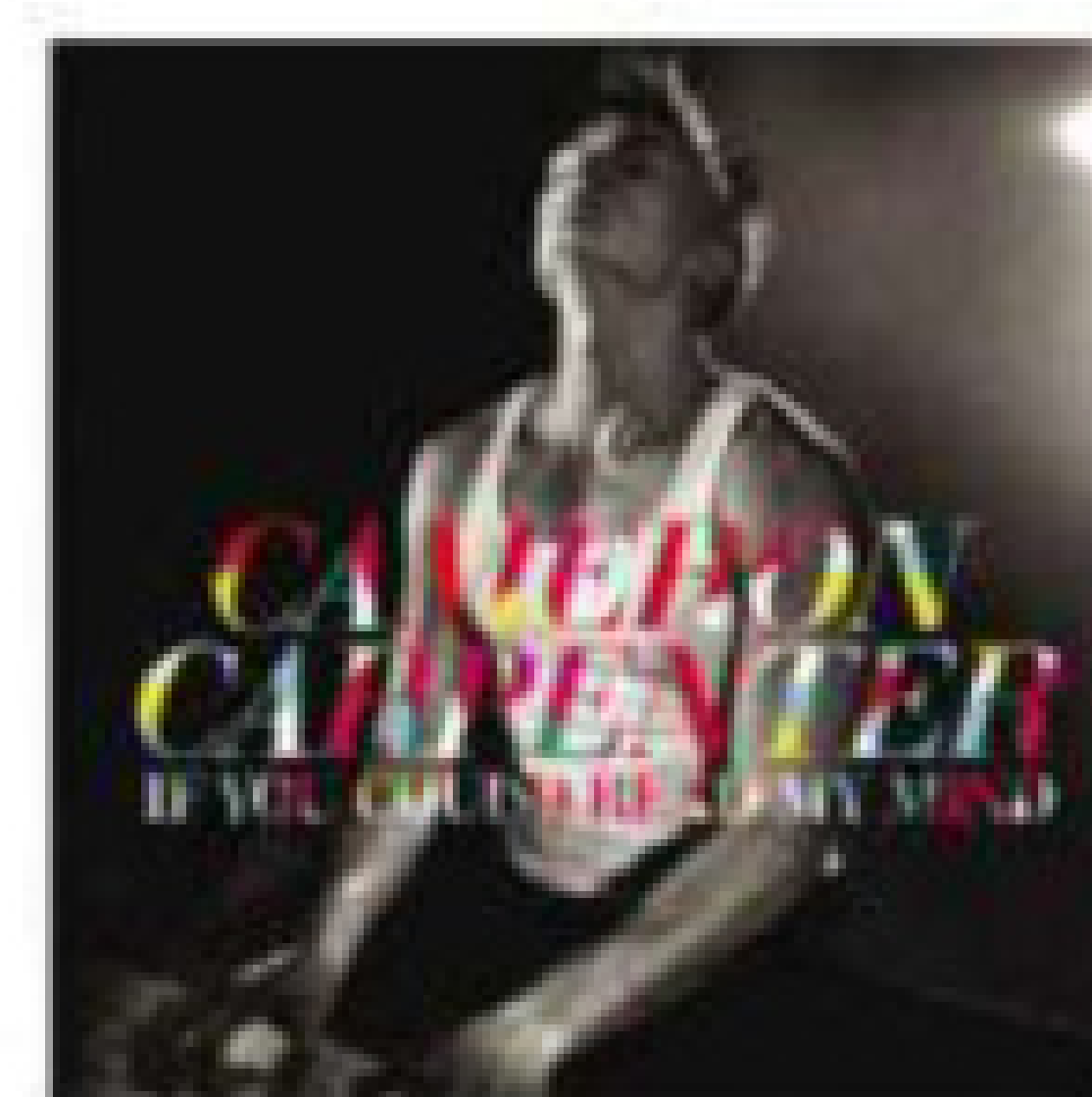
JS Bach Trio Sonata No 6, BWV530

JS Bach/Carpenter Cello Suite Elaboration (after Solo Cello Suite No 1, BWV1007 – Prelude) **Bernstein** Candide – Overture **Carpenter** Music for an Imaginary Film. Song Paraphrases – If you could read my mind (Lightfoot); Alfie (Bacharach); Sisters of mercy (Cohen); Pure imagination (Newley/Bricusse); Back in baby's arms (Montgomery) **Dupré** Variations sur un Noël, Op 20 **Piazzolla** Oblivion **Rachmaninov** Vocalise, Op 34 No 14 **Scriabin** Piano Sonata No 4, Op 30

Cameron Carpenter *org*

Sony Classical © ② (CD + DVD) 88883 79688-2 (78' + 45' • DDD • NTSC)

DVD includes six music clips and documentary: 'Birth of the International Touring Organ'



Bespangled organ shoes, tight jeans, a (clean) vest, a retro Mohican and a touch

of mascara. How different to the sober-suited, short-back-and-sides of Fernando Germani, say, or Sir George Thalben-Ball. Cameron Carpenter is a law unto himself. Not since Virgil Fox has the organ world seen such a flamboyant showman – and the touring organ on which Fox played to crowded arenas has now been completely usurped by Carpenter's self-designed International Touring Organ. It has five manuals, a total amplifier output of 14,000 watts, 52 channels of which 12 are sub-woofers and 40 are full range speakers, and boasts five extra bass and five extra treble pedals. It packs a mighty punch, aided by a spectacular percussion section.

This is Carpenter's debut recording on the ITO, a bizarre mish-mash of a programme which, despite the organist's claim to the contrary, seems designed to show off the instrument rather than illuminate the music. Like a little boy in a candy store, Carpenter cannot resist the infinite number of goodies on offer. His imperceptible, innumerable lightning-quick registration changes are often bar-to-bar (try the *Candide* Overture, a fussy *tour de force*) and often produce inappropriate colouring (such as the intrusive nasal reeds in *Vocalise*) or sounds of saccharine vulgarity (the five *Song Paraphrases*).

I doubt if any organist in history has equalled Carpenter's technique – as the DVD illustrates, four-manual double-thumbings is child's play and certainly the sight of the 'Minute' Waltz played on the pedals is mind-blowing – but purely aurally these visual sleights of hands and feet have no impact. With the exception of the stylish Trio Sonata, one of only two standard-repertoire organ works here, this disc is sonically awesome, technically *sui generis* but musically arid. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'A Matthay Miscellany'

'Rare and unissued recordings by Tobias Matthay and his pupils'

Piano recordings made 1923-58 by **Ethel Bartlett**, **Harriet Cohen**, **Raie Da Costa**, **Hilda Dederich**, **Adolph Hallis**, **Dorothy Howell**, **Denise Lassimonne**, **Ray Lev**, **Ernest Lush**, **Desirée MacEwan**, **Tobias Matthay**, **Nina Milikina**, **Eunice Norton**, **Margaret Portch**, **Rae Robertson**, **Irene Scharrer**, **Bruce Simonds** and **Egerton Tidmarsh** APR © ② APR6014 (156' • ADD)

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

AMERICAN PIANO

Philip Clark listens to recent issues celebrating American pianists and American composers for the instrument



Sucking you in deep: Grete Sultan with John Cage, whose *The Perilous Night* she so memorably recorded

Grete Sultan and **Yvar Mikhashoff** were kindred spirits who defined an authentically American identity for the piano. Sultan fled Nazi Germany, arriving in 1941 in New York City, where eventually she befriended Cage, Feldman and Earle Brown, and performed their work in tandem with her core repertoire of Bach, Beethoven and Schubert. And if Sultan's back story feels heroic, Mikhashoff's life was also tinged with hints of make-believe. Born plain old Ronald Mackay, Mikhashoff co-opted his grandfather's surname, and his intense engagement with American piano lore – Cage, Feldman, Nancarrow and Christian Wolff, and Copland, Virgil Thompson, Roy Harris and Morton Gould – built on the aesthetic foundations established by the likes of William Masselos, David Tudor and Sultan. When Mikhashoff died in 1993, succumbing to Aids aged 52, Sultan was still a sprightly 87-year-old with three years of active playing ahead of a long retirement – she died in 2005 a few days after her 99th birthday.

Over four CDs, Wergo has pulled together highlights from Sultan's recording career, beginning with her landmark 1959 recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and ending with Toshi Ichihyanagi's *In Memory of John Cage*, recorded in 2000. Anyone after a flawless set of *Goldbergs* would better look elsewhere. The piano by Var 26 has started to slide noticeably out of tune; three variations on you could be forgiven

for thinking that you're listening to a Gamelan orchestra. Occasional smudged counterpoint and rhythmic blemishes also disrupt the flow but Sultan's playing comes imbued with such intellectual sublimity that forgiveness comes easy. She mocks the period practice of splitting the *Goldbergs* with an interval after Var 16 and this one-take performance, which incorporates all the repeats, is architecturally full-bodied and played with an intriguingly detached – although admittedly some might say stolid – tone, without any trace of inappropriate Romanticism. Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* is equally the work of a conviction pianist: dramatic interjections turned at the heel, tiered dynamic levels played to the letter. True enough, Schubert's A minor Sonata feels unattractively big-boned; but Schumann's C major *Fantasie* benefits from Sultan's innate muscle and drive. A pellucid, focused Schoenberg *Fünf Klavierstücke* opens the fourth disc before Sultan anticipates the sort of stylistic mix-and-match Mikhashoff would subsequently call his own: Copland, Ben Weber, Stefan Wolpe, Alan Hovhaness, Cage, Ichihyanagi. But this is a mixed bag. The swing soul of Copland's Piano Sonata is missed by a mile but the formalist structures of Weber's *Episodes* and Wolpe's *Form* are sharply and clearly delineated. Cage's prepared-piano piece *The Perilous Night* receives a frankly terrifying performance as Sultan sucks you deep into the eye of the storm.

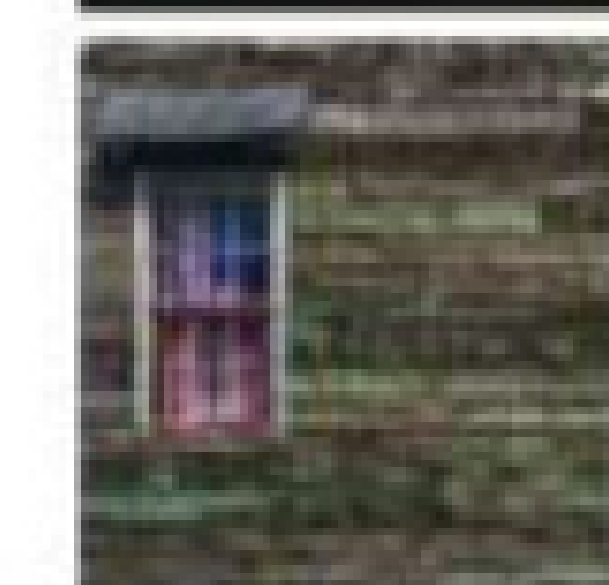
Copland, Wolpe, Hovhaness and Cage all appear again during **Yvar Mikhashoff's** 'Panorama of American Piano Music' and indeed all compositional life – Glass to Sessions, Zappa to Lou Harrison, Gershwin to Wolff – is here. Drew Massey's excellent booklet-notes make clear that Mikhashoff wanted to document the develop of the piano in America in the round, which explains cameos from émigrés like Stravinsky and Mario Davidovsky. Appropriately, though, the set begins with 'The Alcotts' from Ives's *Concord Sonata*, a whole world of tonality and noise glimpsed within a single vision, while the next two pieces, Leon Ornstein's clustery, modernist *Suicide in an Airplane* and Charles Tomlinson Griffes's retro-Romantic Three Preludes, seem – even if we know the history was more complicated – to spill out of the potentialities Ives outlined. Over four and a half hours you become highly discerning about which tonalities sound genuinely fresh and productive against others which merely toe various party lines. I was surprised – very pleasantly – by how strikingly Glass's *Modern Love Waltz* and *Opening* stand out from the crowd. Whatever you may think of his subsequent developments, this isn't the generic tonality of Frank Zappa's *Piano Introduction* or Joseph Schwantner's *Veiled Autumn*. But obvious also is the transformative impact of Mikhashoff's charismatic pianism on anything he touched.

The legacy of Sultan and Mikhashoff lives on in the work of New York pianist Joseph Kubera, whose new release on New World Records begins with music by Julius Eastman (*Piano 2* – ballsy minimalism) and 'Blue' Gene Tyranny (*The Drifter* – ambient roaming) before things hot up with *Fences*, *In Three Tragedies* by Stuart Saunders Smith (a score which invites the performer to define tempo and dynamics) and Michael Byron's very fine *Book of Horizons*, where stately melodic lines railroad through maze-like structures with the harmony dealing up sudden surprises from the bottom of the pack. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



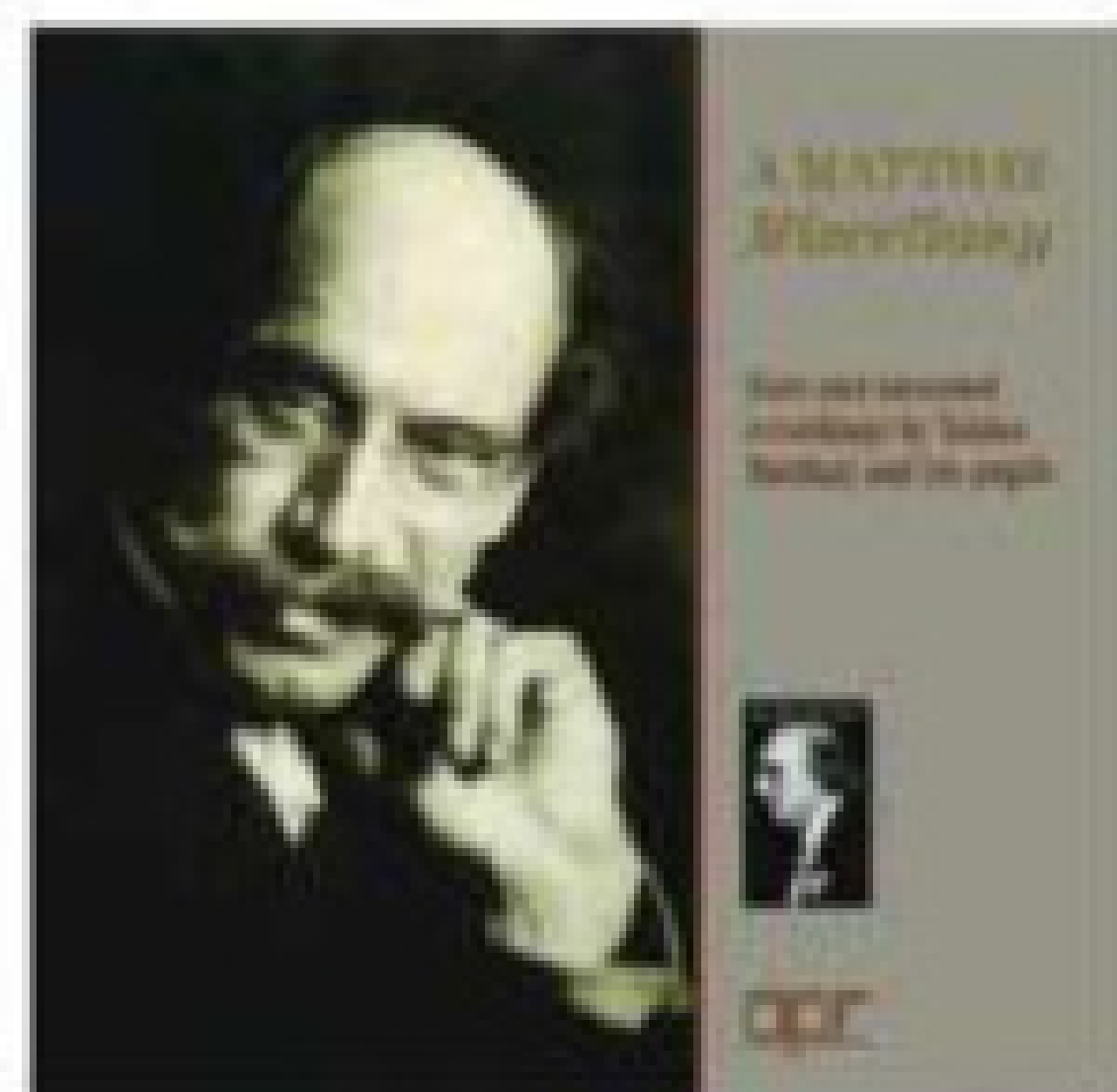
Various Cpsrs Piano Seasons
Sultan
Wergo (B) (4) WER4043-2



Various Cpsrs Panorama of
American Piano Music **Mikhashoff**
Mode (M) (4) MODE262/5



Various Cpsrs Book of Horizons
Kubera
New World (N) (2) NW807455-2



Having already paid tribute to the many celebrated students of Tobias Matthay, APR

continues with a two-disc set reminding you of many others, the majority long lost to musical attention. Matthay (Moura Lympany's beloved 'Uncle Tobs') was held in awe and affection (the two do not always go together). That he was also a fine pianist who kept his playing in more than trim is illustrated in performances of his own charming compositions, recordings that suitably open and close a fascinating album. At the same time, I have to say that this wide-ranging selection of pianists (many of their performances issued on record for the first time) often shows that all that glitters can be more paste than gold. Too often a light, skittering brilliance does service for deeper virtues. This may well prompt reflection on the limited recording techniques of the time (as Eileen Joyce, another Matthay pupil, ruefully put it, 'you had to be quick off the mark in those days') plus the lighter action of pianos of the time. And yet there is so much to relish and to delight.

Of the two discs, the first is the more interesting, with a performance of Bach's Two-Part Inventions by Denise Lassimonne (a clear favourite of Matthay's) taking pride of place. Diamond chippings from the master's workshop, they are given with an immaculate dexterity that never ignores a still centre at the heart of so much teeming vitality. Irene Scharrer, as on a previous Hyperion issue, shows herself a scintillating virtuoso who should never have slipped from view. Her Schumann G minor Sonata is bereft of its slow movement and has only a truncated version of the finale. But the playing is gloriously effervescent and in the middle section of the Schubert A flat Impromptu she gives us all the necessary subtle and dark colouring.

On the second disc, Nina Milkina's Scarlatti, too, combines a matchless alternating verve and reflection with character and resource, helping you to forget Ray Lev's brash, depth-charge manner in Schumann's final *Novelette*, Harriet Cohen's far from seductive 'Danza de la seducción' (Turina) or Raie Da Costa's coarse if exuberant manner in Liszt's *Rigoletto* Paraphrase. Bruce Simond's Schubert B flat Impromptu is sad and lethargic, and yet overall these records provide an invaluable and fascinating glimpse into the past. Mark Obert-Thorn's remastering is a superb achievement and

this lavishly illustrated album comes with a long and detailed essay (even when it is a bit of a rave-up regarding the pianists) by Stephen Siek. **Bryce Morrison**

'Perspectives 6'

Beethoven Piano Sonatas – No 10, Op 14 No 2; No 30, Op 109 **Berio** *Erdenklavier*.

Feuerklavier. Luftklavier. Wasserklavier

Schumann *Fantasie*, Op 17

Andreas Haefliger *pf*

Avie © AV2293 (78' • DDD)



Like its predecessors, the sixth release in Andreas Haefliger's 'Perspectives' series

of mixed recitals includes Beethoven sonatas, leading one to suspect a hidden agenda in the form of an eventual cycle encompassing all 32. The pianist emphasises the lyrical qualities of the opening movement of Op 14 No 2, in contrast to Pollini's recent quicker, more angular interpretation. The *Andante* is terse and lean, with hair-trigger dynamic contrasts, which ought to have characterised the rather sedate finale.

Haefliger's intense and concentrated readings of Berio's *Erdenklavier* and *Wasserklavier* assiduously lead into the eloquently spun first movement of Beethoven's Op 109 Sonata. The second movement may be a tad slower than Beethoven's *Prestissimo* marking implies, yet Haefliger is one of the few pianists not to obscure inner lines in *crescendos*. A cogent feeling for long lines and strong inner rhythm distinguishes the third movement: listen to the often rushed Var 3's wonderful melodic shaping and its effortless transition into Var 4.

Variation 6's chains of trills foreshadow the soft rapid figurations in following selection, Berio's *Luftklavier*, while *Feuerklavier*'s relentless, Scriabin-like trills lead naturally into the rumbling left hand that introduces the final work, Schumann's C major *Fantasie*. This is an ardent, animated and intelligently detailed performance, full of textual diversity that never spills over into contrivance or eccentricity. These qualities especially tell in the central march, where the arpeggiated chords are voiced with purpose and direction, and the obsessive dotted-rhythm polyphony is similarly contoured. Like Kissin, Haefliger not only nails the coda's notorious skips but also brings out the bass-lines. A uncluttered, beautifully wrought finale concludes one of Haefliger's most satisfying releases. **Jed Distler**

Beethoven Pf Son No 10 – selected comparison:

Pollini (12/13) (DG) 477 8806GH

Schumann – selected comparison:

Kissin (RCA) 88697 77071-2

'Piano Reflections'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2 **Chopin** Nocturnes – No 2, Op 9 No 2; No 13, Op 48 No 1 **Debussy** Suite bergamasque **Liszt** *Liebestraum*, S541 No 3 **Mendelssohn**/**Rachmaninov** A Midsummer Night's Dream – Scherzo **Saint-Saëns**/**Liszt**/**Horowitz** *Danse macabre*, Op 40 **Schubert**/**Liszt**/**Horowitz** *Ständchen*, S559a **Tchaikovsky** The Seasons, Op 37b – June: Barcarolle **Wencheng** Autumn Moon Over the Calm Lake

Ji Liu *pf*

Classic FM/Universal © CFMD33 (78' • DDD)



Classic FM has been grooming the young pianist Ji Liu for his debut solo CD, leaving

nothing to chance. The repertoire is tried and true, with a couple of Horowitz transcriptions thrown in, and the inevitable traditional Chinese song served up in a piano arrangement that's easy on the ears and the brain.

Liu opens with a meticulously articulated yet rather earthbound Mendelssohn/Rachmaninov *Scherzo* that doesn't quite match the lightness and elegance others bring to this difficult transcription (Friedrich Hörnicke on MDG, Garrick Ohlsson on EMI or Vladimir Ashkenazy on Decca, to say nothing of Moiseiwitsch and Rachmaninov himself). Liu's melodic projection in both Chopin Nocturnes and Liszt's Third *Liebestraum* lacks the firmness and intent one infers from Bolet and Rubinstein. His fluid, direct and simple *Moonlight* Sonata *Adagio* leads into a controlled, contrived and not terribly lilting *Allegretto*, followed by a earnestly accurate but careful *Presto*. Liu underplays the Schubert/Liszt/Horowitz *Ständchen*'s *cantabiles*, while the Tchaikovsky *Barcarolle*'s lyrical arches wilt and die on the proverbial vine. All the notes are there in the Saint-Saëns/Liszt/Horowitz *Danse macabre* but turn to Yuja Wang and Volodos for more energy and characterful accentuation.

Liu saves his most imaginative and emotionally engaged piano-playing for Debussy's *Suite bergamasque*. He paints the 'Prélude' in broad, generous brush strokes and brings a welcome acerbic edge to the 'Menuet' and 'Passepied' that many pianists prettify to a fault. And 'Claire de lune' sounds as it looks on the printed page, with no kitsch attached. **Jed Distler**

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

JOHN OGDON

25 years since the pianist's death, **Bryce Morrison** re-listens to a collection of recordings by the 'gentle giant' of British virtuosos



Tortured soul: John Ogdon, the most prodigiously gifted pianist Britain has produced

RCA/Sony Classical's six-CD album of John Ogdon's complete RCA Red Seal recordings plus an additional Liszt recital from Japan coincides with Charles Beauchamp's magisterial book *Piano Man: A Life of John Ogdon* (reviewed in June) to celebrate an artist often described as 'the greatest of all British pianists'. Certainly he was the most prodigiously gifted, with an engulfing repertoire and a sight-reading ability that left his fellow musicians open-mouthed. Yet these are mere marginal issues when you stop to consider the actual playing, and virtually all these discs contradict those whose memories remain shadowed by the muddles and confusions caused by the mental instability of Ogdon's final years. In one outsize offering after another, his demoniac temperament (one also blessed with an ethereal delicacy and the most fine-spun sonority) could turn page after page into a raging inferno.

Beneath Ogdon's startlingly shy, faltering and deferential social manner lay a man possessed. If ever there was a one-off pianist it was John Ogdon, a quality noted by Vladimir Ashkenazy (his co-winner in Moscow's 1962 Tchaikovsky Competition), who spoke of something different and exotic, and a charisma that mesmerised Russian audiences. Ogdon may not have possessed that final and perfect sheen so admired by Ivan Moravec

'His demoniac temperament could turn page after page into a raging inferno'

(himself an arch-perfectionist) but he had a communicative force far beyond such nicety, an elemental rage that could just as easily transform into a beguiling delicacy.

An exception from such glory is provided by the **Liszt** recital, which ideally – and despite a superb and endlessly rejuvenated way with the Second *Hungarian Rhapsody* – should not have been issued. Here Ogdon over-reaches himself and his playing implodes, driving out all sense of perspective. Why so frantic in 'Feux follets' from the *Transcendental Etudes* (it is marked *Allegretto*), where poetry and lightness are routed from the field? 'Au bord d'une source' (the first book of *Années de pèlerinage*) is an alpine stream, not Niagara Falls, while the 'Tarantella' from *Venezia e Napoli* is brutally fast.

But then there is **Alkan's** *Concerto for Solo Piano*, less classically sculpted than by Ronald Smith (EMI, 1/70), greater in imaginative scope than from Marc-André Hamelin (Hyperion, A/07), a nonchalant dismissal of so many seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Both the **Rachmaninov** sonatas, too, are given with massive strength and impetus. The Second may be played in the sadly truncated 1931 revision but, when you

hear Ogdon's compulsive brilliance in the final pages or in the First Sonata's first movement's churning development, it seems churlish to complain. You might as well stop a turbine with a toothpick.

By way of Ogdon's range and mastery there is nothing fraught or over-driven in his performance of **Beethoven's** *Hammerklavier* Sonata, the so-called Mount Everest of the keyboard. Here the playing contradicts all possible preconceptions and is unfailingly lucid, the vast spans of the *Adagio sostenuto* given with an inwardness and sense of the ineffable, leaving others to strain for depth and effect.

Nielsen's piano music hardly courts easily popularity, its formidable and icy domain remembering in the clear and contrapuntal pages of the mighty Op 32 Chaconne classical forebears, while retaining an ambience and atmosphere rigorously its own. Ogdon, a tireless explorer of the less familiar, is at his towering best, and whether in austerity or elaboration (the softly flowing semiquavers that close the Theme and Variations) his performances could hardly be excelled.

This leaves me with **Peter Mennin's** sinister, relentless whirlwind of a Concerto. And if your ear tires of such busy virtuosity, you can only marvel at Ogdon's prodigious command. He is no less successful in **Richard Yardumian's** *Passacaglia, Recitative and Fugue*, music less slim in content and more mystically inclined than Mennin's Concerto.

Listening to these records (in many cases being reacquainted with performances first issued on LP) has been an overwhelming experience. During his great days, Ogdon was a richly inclusive artist, making the constant reference to 'a gentle giant' limiting. His gifts and scope were limitless and immense. True, there were times, even during his early days, when he could rage out of control; but even then his recreative and pent-up fury were an awe-inspiring alternative to the more puny attribute of control. The transfers are magnificent and the accompanying booklet is lavishly illustrated. In an age of much anodyne playing, Ogdon's recreative vision and frenzy will always stand out as a force of nature. **G**

THE RECORDING



Various Cpsrs The Complete
RCA Album Collection John Ogdon
RCA © 88843 03907-2

Sofia Gubaidulina

Gavin Dixon salutes a composer whose music was once smuggled out of Russia and who remains a powerful creative force in her 80s

As the Soviet system gradually lost its grip on power through the 1980s, a diverse range of compositional voices was released into the wider musical world. A generation of 'unofficial' composers, effectively an underground movement in the 1960s and '70s, suddenly came to prominence. Western audiences were introduced to the sophisticated polystylism of Alfred Schnittke, the esoteric serialism of Edison Denisov, the serene tintinnabulation of Arvo Pärt – and to Sofia Gubaidulina. Her music was, and remains, difficult to categorise. She is a religious maximalist, who employs an often brutal modernist language to express and explore dimensions of her Christian faith. Her music always seems immediate and spontaneous, yet is underpinned by sophisticated mathematical procedures. And, while she embraces joy, hope and light in her music, she does so via extreme contrasts, often leading her listeners through dark and unsettling places on her very individual path to transcendence.

Gidon Kremer brought Gubaidulina's music to international attention when he gave the premiere of her violin concerto *Offertorium* in Vienna in 1981. The Soviet authorities almost succeeded in preventing the concert from taking place, but it was made possible by Gubaidulina's enterprising Western publisher, Jürgen Köchel, who smuggled the score out of the

'Religion has permeated Gubaidulina's music since the late 1970s, yet any consolation it offers is always hard won'

country to get it to Kremer. The premiere was a great success, and Kremer continued to spread the word in the following years, giving performances of the concerto with leading orchestras around the world.

When *Offertorium* was premiered, Gubaidulina was approaching 50. She had already spent several decades refining her approach, and so the compositional voice that the concerto presented was already fully formed – distinctive and mature. And the work proved an ideal introduction to Gubaidulina's musical world. It includes many of her recurring traits: a huge, percussion-saturated orchestra, a questing but not necessarily heroic soloist, and a religious subject, acknowledged in the liturgical title, but never guaranteeing certainty or absolution. The concerto is based on the 'Royal Theme' from Bach's *Musical Offering*, and explores concepts of offering and sacrifice on many levels. Bach's offering becomes a musical paradigm for God's offering through the Creation and for Christ's



self-sacrifice on the cross. Typically for Gubaidulina, such ideas also play out at a more prosaic level, with the soloist's 'sacrifice of himself in self-surrender to the tone' central to the work's meaning.

Gubaidulina's music is often very consciously 'deep' and 'profound', but here too simple description and subtle metaphor blend. Her musical discourse often resides in lower registers and she has written many solo works for bass instruments, including concertos for double bass and bassoon. Another bass-heavy instrument for which Gubaidulina often writes is the bayan, the Russian button accordion. Her first bayan composition was entitled *De Profundis*, and, echoing the Psalm from which it takes its name, the first sounds are heard 'from the depths', in the earthy resonance of the instrument's bass register. The work makes extensive use of unpitched breathing sounds, produced by half-opening the bellows – very corporeal and worldly, profane even. But it then ascends, through *glissandos* and shuddering vibrato textures, until finally coming to rest in the very highest register: a journey of transcendence, but one as beset by earthly concerns as it is redeemed by heavenly powers.

Although a devout believer for many decades, Gubaidulina came late to the Orthodox faith. Originally from Tartarstan, a Muslim enclave in Southern European Russia, Gubaidulina has roots in both Christianity and Islam (her paternal grandfather was an imam), but her immediate family was secular. Surveying her music of the 1960s and '70s, we find a gradual acceptance of the Orthodox faith, finally becoming explicit in her work with *Introitus*, a piano concerto from 1978, and *Offertorium*, begun the following year.



Gubaidulina (centre) discussing the score of *In Tempus Praesens* with Anne-Sophie Mutter and Valery Gergiev

GUBAIDULINA FACTS

Born 1931 Chistopol

Has written works for

Mstislav Rostropovich, Gidon Kremer, Simon Rattle, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Yuri Bashmet, Arditti Quartet, Boston Symphony Orchestra

Awards Russian State Prize 1992, Praemium Imperiale (Japan) 1998, Great Distinguished Service Cross of the Order of Merit (Germany) 2002, Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement (Biennale di Venezia 2013)

Religion has permeated Gubaidulina's music ever since, yet any consolation that it offers is always hard won. Chorale themes appear, or the tolling of church bells, but usually within dark, ambiguous textures, as if the music is more concerned about the need for religious faith in the modern world than about the assurances of deliverance it offers. And yet, when such deliverance does occur, as at the conclusion of

The Canticle of the Sun, a work for cello, percussion and chorus written for Mstislav Rostropovich, the radiant, even naive, simplicity she invests in her heavenly textures achieves a powerful, ecstatic effect through its extreme contrast with the terseness of the earlier music.

The Canticle of the Sun, which is based on a text by St Francis of Assisi, has a ritualistic quality that is another common feature in Gubaidulina's work. The cello soloist acts as celebrant, intoning chimes on various percussion instruments and moving around the performance space as the chorus chants solemnly behind. Similarly, Gubaidulina's 1986 symphony *Stimmen...Verstummen...* ('Voices...Silence...') includes a 'conductor solo', a silent movement in which the conductor performs a series of actions specified in the score, a miniature performance ritual itself, and an indication of the ritualistic significance of the work as a whole.

That ritual quality also informs Gubaidulina's approach to structure and progression. Her surprising changes of tempo and mood can feel impulsive, yet always fit seamlessly into the music's grand scheme. Gubaidulina achieves this through a subtle combination of impulsive creativity and rigorous formal planning. Her musical intuition was refined in the 1970s when she was a member of an ensemble called Astreya. The group specialised in improvised performances on folk instruments from Russia and Central Asia and instilled in the composer a sense of spontaneity in her writing, as well as a taste for exotic instrumentation.

The mathematical structures in Gubaidulina's music are more covert, and she has generally been less willing to discuss them in detail. Rostropovich recalled once visiting her home,

and catching a glimpse of a work in progress: 'I saw a manuscript in her study that resembled an engineer's drawing – something for a plane like the Concorde or for a computer. There was an abundance of carefully drawn lines.' He asked her about it, but all she said was, 'Never mind, that's my business.' More recently, though, some of these secrets have been revealed. The Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel owns many of Gubaidulina's compositional sketches, and detailed studies of these have demonstrated that number patterns, particularly the Fibonacci sequence, have underpinned Gubaidulina's structural thinking since the mid-1980s. But Gubaidulina herself sees no contradiction here; to her, sophisticated mathematical proportioning frees her rhythms and structuring from the confines of simple regularity, it allows her music to breathe.

Since she came to international attention in the 1980s, the majority of Gubaidulina's works have been written to Western commissions. In 1992 she moved west herself, taking up residence in a small village outside Hamburg. She still lives there today, composing prodigiously even into her 80s. The scale and ambition of her music remains undimmed, and more recent compositions, such as *The Light at the End* (2003), a Boston Symphony Orchestra commission, and the Pushkin-inspired *Feast During a Plague* (2006), continue her predilection for huge orchestras and long, unbroken spans of intense musical activity. In 2007, Gubaidulina followed up *Offertorium* with a second violin concerto, *In Tempus Praesens*. This new concerto traces a typical Gubaidulina narrative from darkness to light, the soloist continually striving to overcome oppressive, bass-heavy textures from the orchestra. It was inspired and commissioned by Anne-Sophie Mutter, who gave the premiere with Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic, and who has since recorded the concerto to great acclaim with Valery Gergiev and the London Symphony Orchestra (10/08).

Attending a Gubaidulina premiere today is a curious experience: watching her modestly acknowledge the applause at the end, it can be difficult to believe that the colossal, profound and emotionally devastating music you have just experienced could be the work of such a petite, mild-mannered and amiable octogenarian. **G**

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Three discs representing the range of Gubaidulina's music



Offertorium

Gidon Kremer *vn* Boston SO / Charles Dutoit

DG (M) 479 1518 (9/89^R)

Gubaidulina's breakthrough work, performed by its dedicatee. A compendium of Gubaidulina's mature style and an ideal introduction to her music.



The Canticle of the Sun. Music for Flute, Strings and Percussion

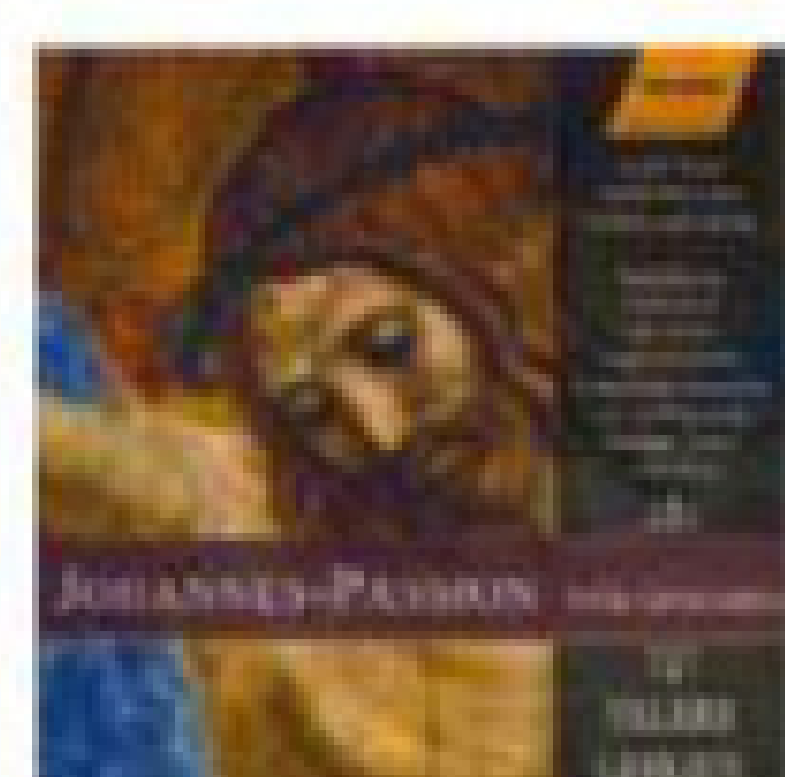
Emmanuel Pahud *fl* Simon Carrington, Neil Percy,

John Alley *perc* London Voices; LSO / Ryusuke Numajiri;

Mstislav Rostropovich *vc*

EMI Classics (C) 557153-2 (9/01)

Iconic works of the 1990s in benchmark recordings.



St John Passion

Sols; Mariinsky Theatre Orch / Valery Gergiev

Hänssler Classic (M) 2 98 405 (2/02)

Like a Russian Orthodox version of a Bach Passion setting. Austere but compelling.

Vocal



Lindsay Kemp reviews a new Monteverdi Vespers recording: *'It combines the immediacy and clarity of a smaller-scale performance with the sonic thrill of a larger one'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



David Patrick Stearns on a great tenor live at Wigmore Hall: *'Bostridge is in excellent voice here and never so heedless as to be mannered'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**

Bruckner

Mass No 3

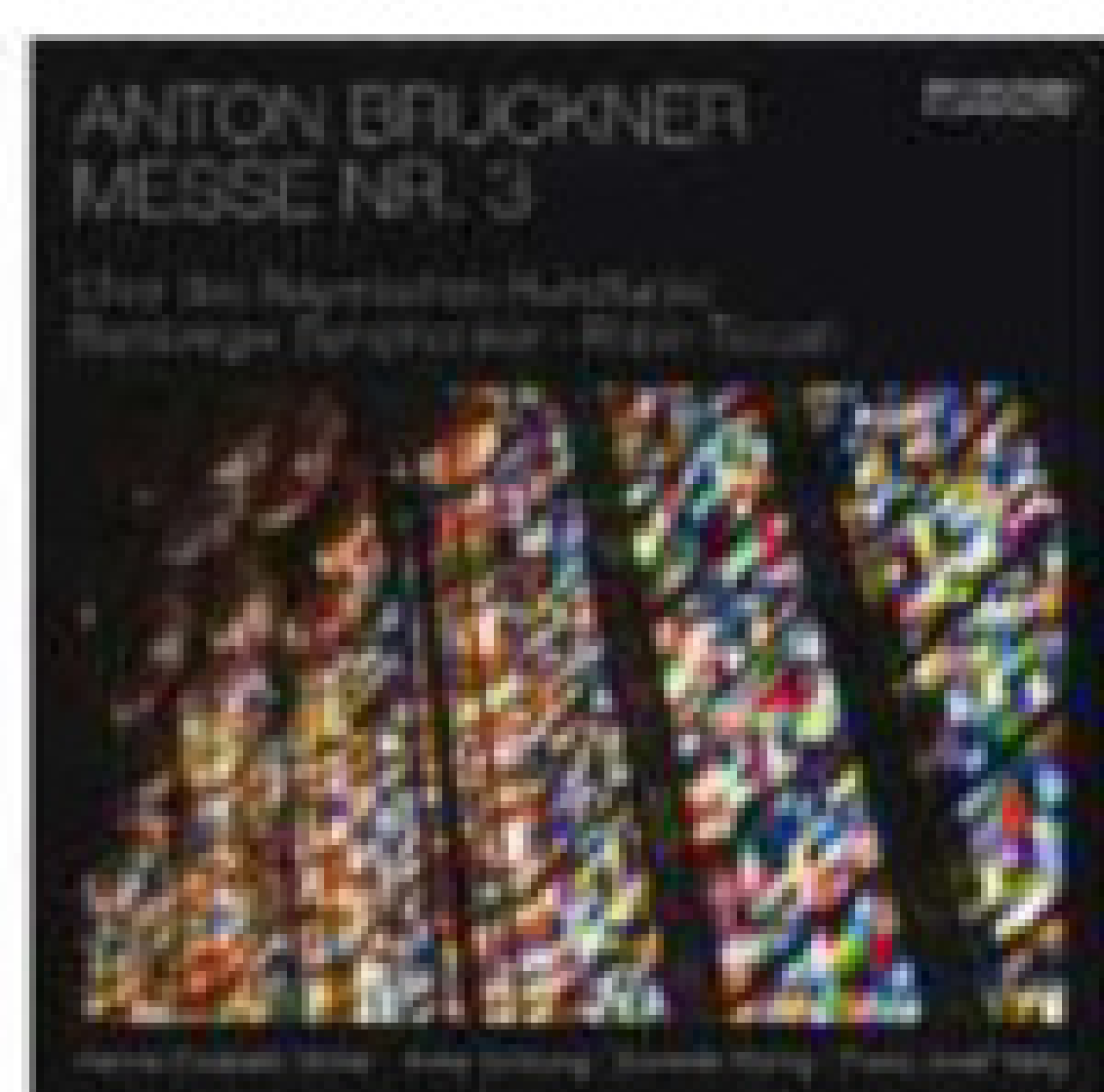
Hanna-Elisabeth Müller *sop* Anke Vondung *contr*

Dominik Wortig *ten* Franz-Josef Selig *bass*

Bavarian Radio Chorus; Bamberg

Symphony Orchestra / Robin Ticciati

Tudor (F) TUDOR7193 (62' • DDD/DSD)



Performances on disc remain relatively rare, and I wish I could greet this new

recording of Bruckner's Mass No 3 in F minor with more enthusiasm. Robin Ticciati's feel for Bruckner's intricate structure – especially the labyrinthine *Credo* – runneth over with instinctive wisdom, and he marshals a top-notch team of vocal soloists. Every time I hear the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra I'm reminded that they're real contenders; but what a pity this careful attention to detail has been torpedoed by sound balance problems.

The realisation dawns that something might be amiss when the chorus (marked *ff*) slump into the orchestra after the first soprano and bass solos in the *Kyrie*. Comparable balance problems bedevil the *Credo*, where the orchestra and chorus, occupying the same register, battle it out for air, with the muscle of the orchestra always prevailing. In the *Credo* (at fig F), a characteristic low string/timpani *tremolo* is inaudible (even when heard through my very expensive headphones, although through CD, not SACD channels).

If you're prepared to overlook those problems, Ticciati is certainly on the Bruckner ball. Taking his cue from the snaking chromatic pathways of the opening string music – where each chord is skilfully coloured and internally balanced – he keeps the structure of the *Kyrie* on an elastic leash, tightening the reins abruptly when the harmony settles down and comes to rest as the end of the movement approaches. The snarled, biting string-writing at the beginning of the *Credo* sounds decidedly Stravinskian; and the

Credo is maturely mapped, with light allowed to shine through its information overload. Ticciati 1 – sound engineers nil.

Philip Clark

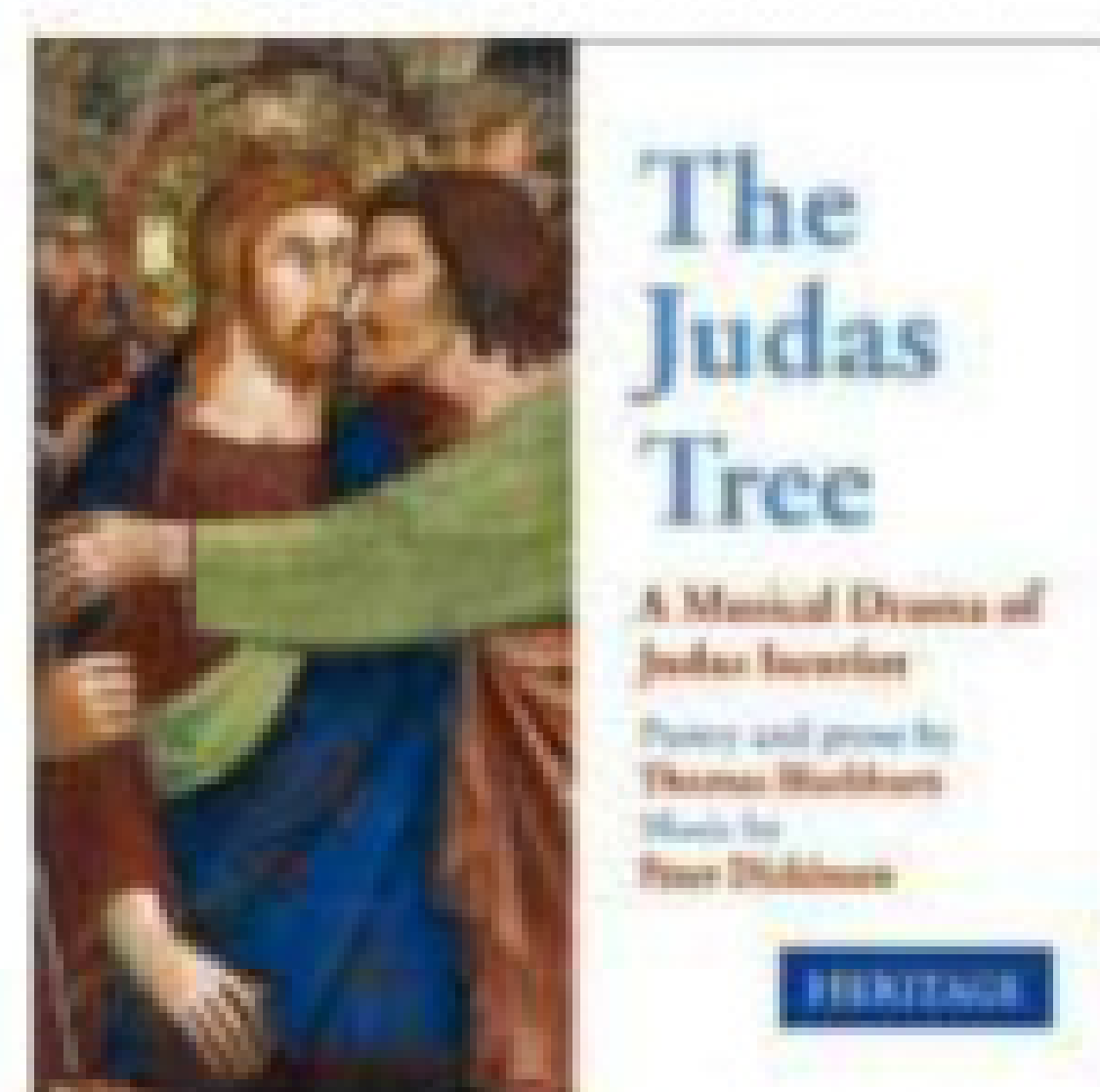
Dickinson

The Judas Tree

Camerata Chorus / Richard W Dirksen

Heritage mono (F) HTGCD263 (70' • ADD • T)

Recorded live at Washington National Cathedral, March 24 & 25, 1967



Peter Dickinson and author Thomas Blackburn share equal billing on the CD

booklet of their musical drama about Judas Iscariot and for good reason, as one third of its running time is of declaimed text, making it something of a hybrid, a stage drama interspersed with choral tableaux. *The Judas Tree* was first performed in the UK in 1965, thereafter at the Washington National Cathedral in March 1967, when this recording was made. Although a number of instrumental pieces were omitted from the performance, it must be particularly gratifying to have a souvenir in resonant mono sound of that auspicious occasion that took place in the sixth largest cathedral in the world.

Blackburn's libretto centres on the redemptive power of Christianity to forgive Judas Iscariot for his betrayal of Christ. In the unfolding drama Judas is addressed by a sanctimonious Pilate, a Dominican monk and a Nazi commandant. Finally Judas himself speaks. Their words are clear but their delivery today sounds stilted and ponderous. The singers are well deserving of praise, the apostles in particular, and the chorus enliven the drama with their spirited singing, despite the restrictive recording. The well-rehearsed (uncredited) orchestra makes its presence felt at key dramatic moments. The choral writing is light on its feet, anticipating the syncopations in Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, with trumpet fanfares and march

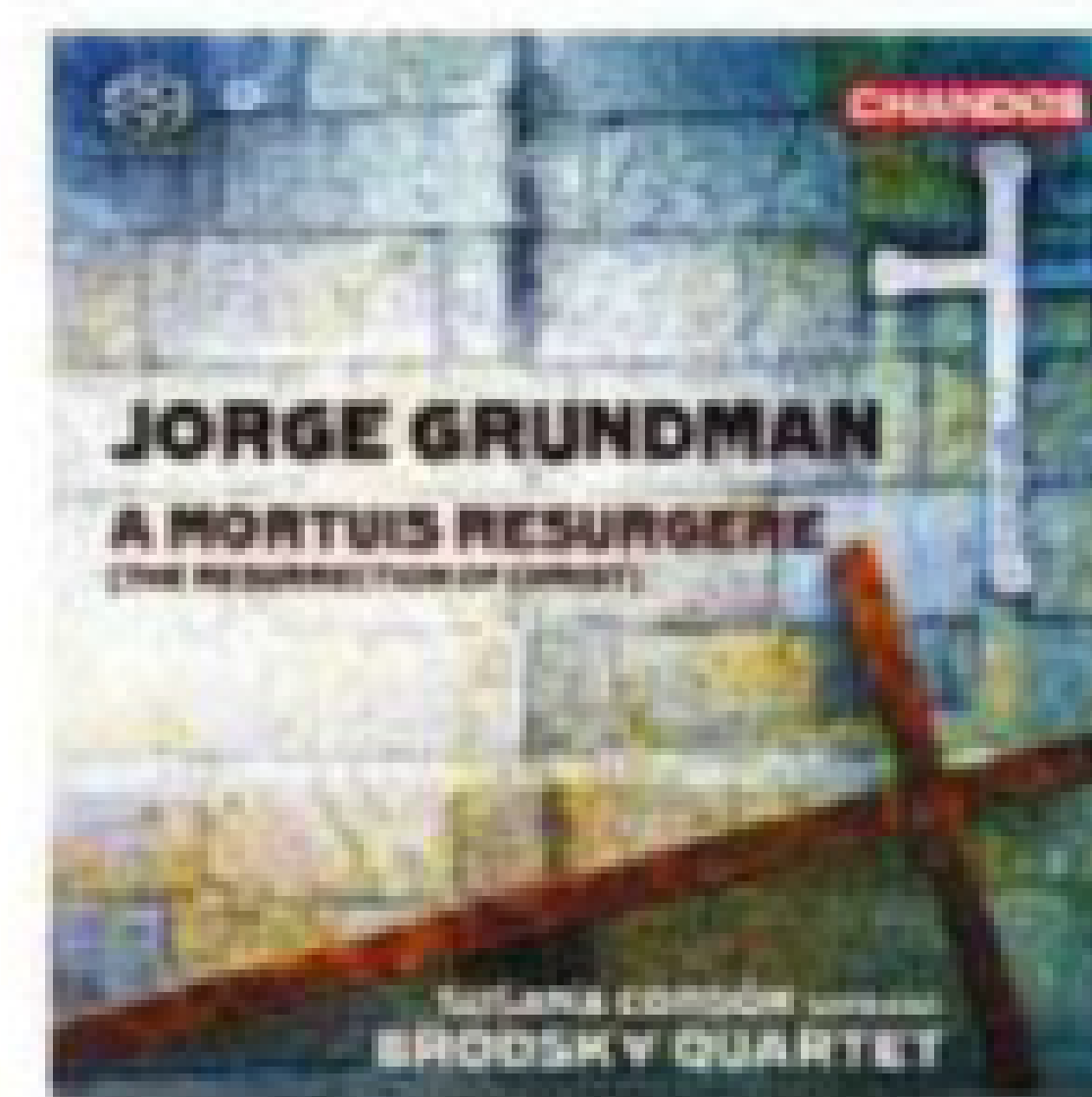
rhythms keeping the drama on its toes. Dickinson's music is on more traditional ground, with its references to the Passion hymn *O sacred head* heard in the scene where Pilate pleads for Judas to be pardoned, and the hymn tune *Nicaea* ('Holy, holy, holy') at Simon Peter's interrogation. *The Judas Tree* maybe a period piece but it is a fascinating one, a slice of 1960s memorabilia from that extraordinary cultural decade. **Adrian Edwards**

Grundman

A mortuis resurgere

Susana Cordon *sop* Brodsky Quartet

Chandos (F) CHSA5138 (54' • DDD/DSD • T/D)



His classical credentials might be impeccable but Jorge Grundman (b1961) is

best known for his research into acoustics and technology – and also being a member of rock bands such as Fahrenheit 451, which enjoyed passing *succès d'estime* in the UK. *A mortuis resurgere* (*The Resurrection of Christ*) is his third and largest collaboration with the Brodsky Quartet, taking its cue from Haydn's *Seven Last Words* – to whose quartet version it is an intended companion piece. The 12 continuous movements comprise four main sections: verses from St John's Gospel recount the events of Christ's entombment and resurrection, followed by a setting of the *Credo* that forms the work's emotional climax, then by the *Hosanna*, in which the overall mood is lightened subtly though appreciably.

Grundman's writing for string quartet is expert and resourceful, his loose-limbed melodic lines and rich while rarely cloying diatonic harmonies providing a variegated context for soprano-writing which ranges from confiding to histrionic – all securely encompassed by Susana Cordon (even if her vibrato can become intrusive in passages above *forte*). The Brodsky perform with their customary tonal warmth and attention to detail, the spaciouly

immediate sound testifying to the composer's concern for presenting his music within a sympathetic ambience. How one responds to this piece depends on how far one buys into its emotional sincerity: for a rather more provocative response to the Haydn, try Bernhard Lang's *The Anatomy of Disaster*, issued on the Winter & Winter label. **Richard Whitehouse**

Handel

The Triumph of Time and Truth, HWV71

Sophie Bevan, Mary Bevan *sops* Tim Mead

countertenor Ed Lyon *ten* William Berger *bass*

Ludus Baroque / Richard Neville-Towle

Delphian (M) ② DCD34135 (155' • DDD • T)



It is misleading to rank *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (1757) as Handel's last English

oratorio. Unlike *Jephtha* (1752), it was not his own fresh work but an anglicised (and de-Catholicised) adaptation of his very first Roman oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (1707), prepared by librettist Thomas Morrell working in collaboration with John Christopher Smith junior (Handel's pupil, assistant and heir), but based on Handel's own extensive London revision (1737). Handel's only direct involvement was likely to have been limited to offering approving consent (or otherwise). None of this fundamental stuff is explained in Delphian's booklet essay; nor does it report that Richard Neville-Towle presents the complete content of Handel/Smith's 1758 revival (for which the role of Deceit was expanded).

The small orchestra's playing is stylish and characterful, and Delphian's excellent sound engineering fosters a perfect bloom for splendid trumpets and choral exclamations in the opening chorus, 'Time is supreme'. The choir is ideally convivial, shapely of phrase and immaculate with text in the delightful chorus 'Pleasure submits to pain' that commences Act 2. Tim Mead sings serenely in Counsel's 'Mortals think that Time is sleeping', a 1707 aria that retains its pair of cathartic recorders. Ed Lyon's cheerful evocation of pastoral romps in Pleasure's 'Dryads, Sylvans, with fair Flora' makes sin seem seductively plausible, whereas William Berger sings the solemn warnings of Time with compassionate authority: 'Loathsome urns, disclose your treasure' is subtly characterised by whispering strings and cautionary bassoon. It is intriguing to hear how Smith rewrote Agrippina's flirtatious 'Ogni vento' for the seductive siren

Deceit's 'Happy Beauty, who, Fortune now smiling', finding attractive ways to use oboes, bassoons and a pair of horns that support the blithe Mary Bevan on fine form. Sophie Bevan matches her distinguished predecessor Gillian Fisher (Darlow, Hyperion) stride for stride; her eventual choice of Christian virtue over sensual decadence is expressed eloquently. Ludus Baroque's most valuable Handel recording so far confirms that this unclassifiable, peculiar work is well worth revisiting. **David Vickers**

Selected comparison:

London Handel Orch, Darlow (6/83^R) (HYPE) CDD22050

K Jenkins

'Motets'

Adiemus: Songs of Sanctuary – Ave Maria; Cantate Domino. The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace – Benedictus; Agnus Dei; God shall wipe away all tears. Exsultate, jubilate. Gloria – I'll make music; Laudamus te. The Healer – Nunc dimittis; The Shepherd. Locus iste. The Peacemakers – Dona nobis pacem; Healing Light; Peace, peace!. Requiem – Pie Jesu; In Paradisum. Stabat mater – And the Mother did weep; Ave verum corpus. Stella natalis – Lullay

Polyphony / Stephen Layton

DG (F) 479 3232GH (74' • DDD • T/t)



When John Rutter composed *The Shepherd's Pipe Carol* for the second volume

of *Carols for Choirs* back in 1967, he set in motion a new sound for church music with repertoire that was catchy and tuneful, easy to learn and equally enjoyable for singers and audience. Such music was fresh to the ear and quickly caught on. This CD of motets by Karl Jenkins follows a similar pattern, featuring generous, warm-hearted compositions like the songs of yesteryear that are designed to have an immediate appeal to audiences.

The music chosen for this CD is an unexpected choice by Polyphony for their DG debut but Stephen Layton knows how to make these pieces take wing and gives them polish and sheen. The opening track, 'I'll make music', tells us much about what follows. The words from the Old Testament ('Lord and Master, I'll sing a song to you') are set to an appealing melody full of fresh air, the tune reminiscent in character of a Jerome Kern melody such as he might have penned in his early collaboration with PG Wodehouse. Like Kern, Jenkins loves modulations and Polyphony's smooth performance has a glee-club enthusiasm

and sophistication. The singers might be mindful of singing 'you' and not 'yew' at times and the strong soprano line-up never need to push the tone. To experience Jenkins's versatility, I would suggest a sequence moving from the opening motet to the gorgeous 'Laudamus te' (tr 3), through the dainty 6/8 curvature of Blake's 'The Shepherd', followed by 'Ave Maria' with its broken chant of 'A-ve', an invigorating, trip-along *Exsultate, jubilate* (tr 12), the star setting, and the rhythmically subtle 'Lullay' (tr 16).

The acoustic of All Hallows' Church, Hampstead, sometimes blurs the words on the upper line – or is it an artificial halo we hear at the beginning of 'God shall wipe away all tears'? Throughout, Polyphony and Layton once again demonstrate their innate professionalism and a genuine enjoyment in singing this repertoire. **Adrian Edwards**

Josquin

Missa Ave maris stella. Mittit ad virginum.

Missus est Gabriel Angelus

Cappella Pratensis / Stratton Bull

Challenge Classics (F) ② CC72632 (60' • DDD)



As one of his most perfect works, Josquin's *Mass Ave maris stella*

is now available in a wide range of great performances – a substantial change from the situation 20 years ago, when the versions by Andrew Parrott (EMI, 5/93) and Bernard Fabre-Garrus (Astrée/Naïve, 2/94) were the first on CD.

Among the distinctive details here are that it is performed at probably the lowest possible pitch. This worried me at first, and it is true that some of the lowest notes are inclined to disappear; but the textures are in general exceptionally clear and, partly as a result of that pitch, the lines are beautifully relaxed. Another distinctive detail is of course that the Cappella Pratensis have always based their repertory around music of the Josquin period, as a result of which everything sounds a lot less forced than some other performances.

Another special detail here is the inclusion of the Proper chants for the Mass. And one of the truly magical and peaceful moments here is that way the *Sanctus* grows out of the end of the Preface. How the rhythms in the monophonic chants were established is not explained: they may be based on just guesswork, but are highly original; and the chant in general is always attractive, not a mere space-filler between the polyphony.

As a serious eccentricity, the polyphony (and most of the chant) is sung with a French pronunciation of the Latin but some of the priest sections are sung with Italian pronunciation, based on the knowledge that most of the singers in the Sistine Chapel were francophone but the celebrants were Italians. The singer (not identified) sounds a lot better than most priests I have heard, but this is taking historical style to a new extreme.

David Fallows

Keiser

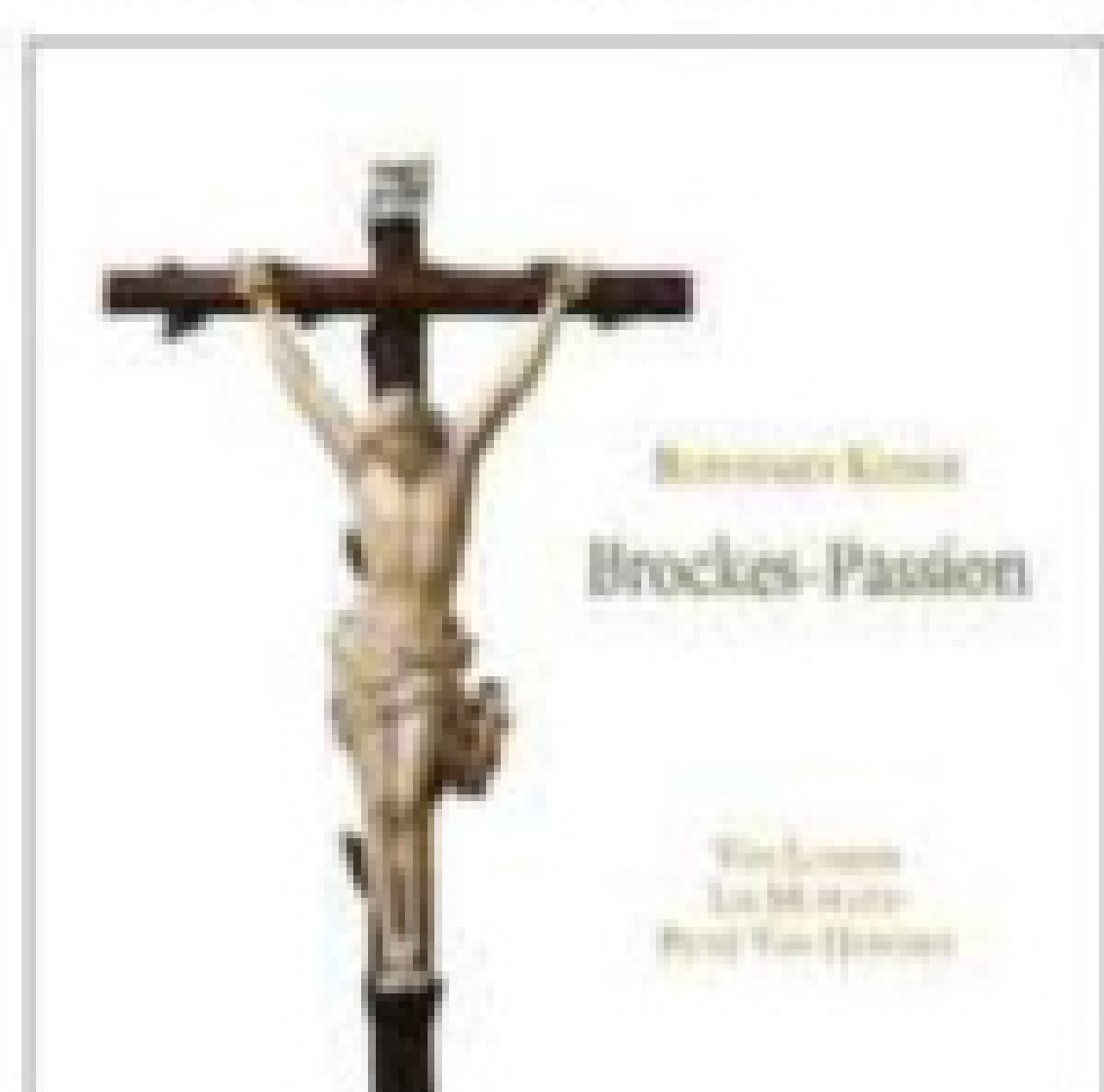
Brockes-Passion

Zsuzsi Tóth *sop* Jan Van Elsacker *ten*

Peter Kooij *bass* Vox Luminis; Les Muffatti /

Peter Van Heyghen

Ramée (M) ② RAM1303 (121' • DDD • T/t)



Intrepid admirers of Baroque sacred music will probably know something about

Handel's so-called *Brookes Passion* (c1716), and there have also been high-profile recordings of settings by Telemann (Frankfurt, 1716) and Stölzel (Gotha, 1725). However, Barthold Heinrich Brockes's innovative German Passion oratorio libretto *Der für die Sünde der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus* was originally set to music by Reinhard Keiser for domestic performance at the poet's house in Holy Week 1712. This recording is the fruit of collaboration between Belgian Baroque band Les Muffatti and Gramophone Award-winning vocal ensemble Vox Luminis; bass Lionel Meunier takes responsibility for his group of singers but the overall performance is conducted with ideal rhetorical solemnity and dramatic intensity by Peter Van Heyghen.

Peter Kooij is surprisingly bold in his delivery of some of Jesus's vivid accompanied recitatives but there are plenty of moments that display his customarily compassionate singing, such as the soliloquy 'Mein Vater, schau wie ich mich quäle'. Hugo Oliveira's indignant condemnation of Caiaphas and his corrupt council is highly effective, and Fernando Guimarães sings Peter's bitter self-reproach after his denial of Christ with the sort of potent yet dry timbre that reminded me of Peter Schreier. The Daughter of Zion has plenty to say in a host of short contemplative arias but Zsuzsi Tóth produces routinely lovely singing, whether in lively arias or gentler music that sways with melodious charm, such as 'Heil der Welt, dein schmerzlich Leiden', in which

the magical effect of *pizzicato* strings and *concertante* flute and violin would not be out of place in one of Bach's Weimar cantatas. Handel's lessons learnt from Keiser at the Hamburg opera house are manifest in the richly pictorial woodwind in dialogue with Caroline Weynants's rapturous singing in the Believing Soul's 'Dem Himmel gleicht sein buntgestriemter Rücken', whereas the choral enquiries 'Wohin?' during 'Eilt ihr angefochtenen Seelen' were clearly a model for the comparable moment in Bach's *St John Passion* a dozen years later.

David Vickers

Kyr

The Singer's Ode. The Cloud of Unknowing^a.

Songs of the Soul^a

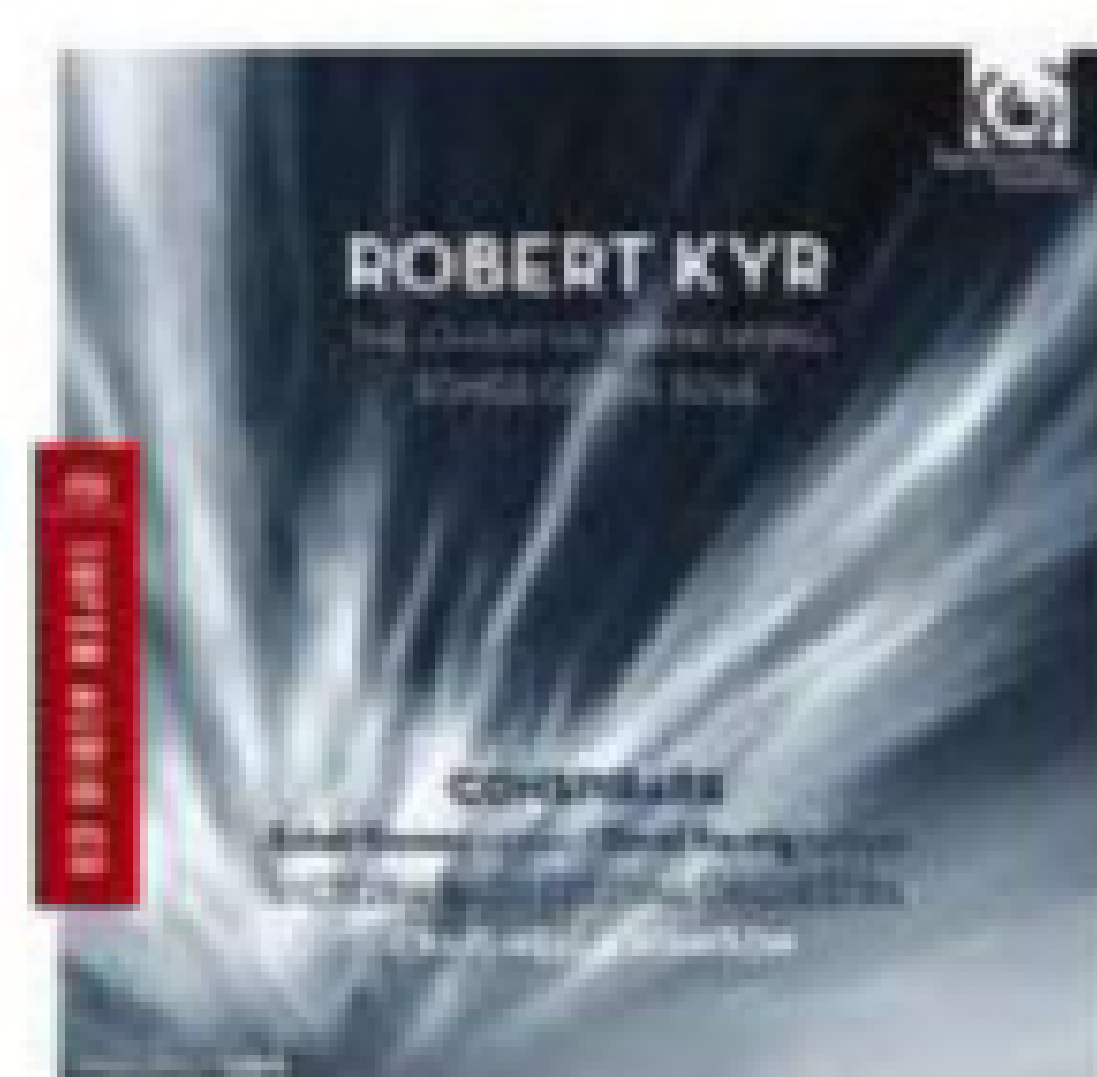
^aEstelí Gomez *sop* ^aDavid Farwig *bar*

Conspirare; Victoria Bach Festival Orchestra /

Craig Hella Johnson

Harmonia Mundi (P) HMU80 7577

(77' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Robert Kyr (b1952) represents a curious phenomenon: a composer just now

achieving mainstream recognition after a long, productive creative life guided less by current fashions and more by a far-reaching spiritual exploration that allows him to ignore outside expectations and compose with a broad palette of texts by saints and mystics, and to express their words not with a need to project his own compositional voice but with an instinctively appropriate mixture of high-concept choral harmonies and near-vernacular song, seasoned with well-selected exotic world-music influences. Giving this disc the blindfold test – knowing absolutely nothing about him and never having heard his music before – I supposed that he was a bit over 30, maybe from Arabic heritage but trained in the US. As it turns out, he's over 60, as American as can be, and teaching at the Oregon School of Music.

What all of this adds up to is beautiful, thoughtful, sincere music with far more emotional complexity than Morten Lauridsen but expressed in a manner that's not so individual and doesn't really strive to be. The opening piece on this disc sets the tone: *The Singer's Ode* (2012), his own version of 'An die Musik', with heartfelt words written by the composer that talk about giving himself over selflessly to an art that seems to exist outside of himself. This is important to note: perhaps the main reason this disc is so inviting – and it's inviting indeed – is its lack of any holier-

than-thou pretension. As suggested by the title of one of the main cantatas on the disc, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, no denominational agenda is apparent. This is who he is, and he'd love to share that with you.

The disc's two cantatas – the other being *Songs of the Soul*, and both written within the last three years – draw on texts from many sources and in a variety of languages, with psalms in Latin, texts by St Teresa of Avila in Castilian and anonymous texts, almost all of which are so stimulating that one is happy to have this disc just to read the booklet. And though he talks about having JS Bach as a model, Kyr uses a sense of counterpoint that's loose-limbed, more like poetic simultaneity. Much of the music feels through-composed, building slowly but effectively. One of the best pieces is the least characteristic, a movement titled 'Enduring' that is more animated than much of the rest, with voices leapfrogging over each other, happily recalling some of the more playful moments in early Britten. Word-painting is in evidence but never heavy-handed. Orchestra, when used at all, is used sparingly, sometimes with a solo obbligato (the most Bach-like aspect of his music) but usually as an unobtrusive frame, often with shimmering *tremolos* that are played a few notches above a whisper. It should sound like a cliché but doesn't.

Performances are what one would expect from Conspirare under Craig Hella Johnson – sincere, sung with a full-throated tone and always ready to reach towards something ecstatic, all perfect for SACD technology. How can one be disappointed in that? Well, I am. Given that individuality seems not to be one of Kyr's priorities, I prefer a performance style with less sound and more specificity. Of the two vocal soloists, the soprano Estelí Gomez is completely on the right page with a beautifully produced voice and a bit of other-worldly detachment that I miss from the borderline-vernacular tone of the baritone David Farwig. **David Patrick Stearns**

Mahler

'A Life in Songs'

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen. Frühe Lieder.

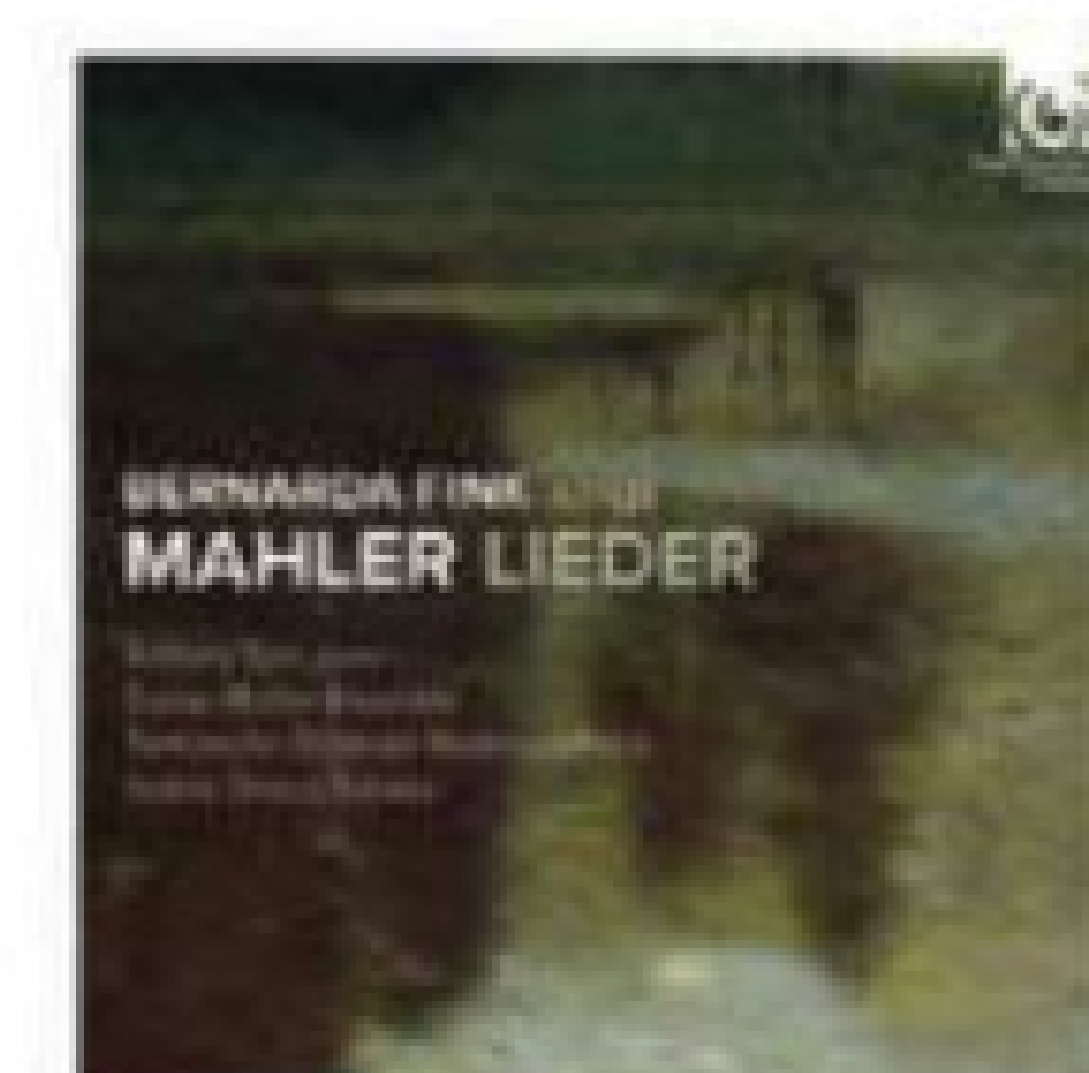
Kindertotenlieder. Rückert Lieder

Bernarda Fink *mez* Anthony Spiri *pf*

Gustav Mahler Ensemble; Tonkünstler Orchestra,

Lower Austria / Andrés Orozco-Estrada

Harmonia Mundi (P) HMC90 2173 (78' • DDD)



This recital takes us through 25 years of Mahler's composing life, from the *Frühe*

Lieder to the *Rückert Lieder*. Not only that, it mixes up the accompaniment between piano, orchestra and Arnold Schoenberg's 1920 chamber ensemble arrangements (of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*). It's interesting, of course, to hear the songs in these three guises but it risks making the disc feel more like a compilation than a recital, and means a certain jolt as we switch textures, especially between the textures of Anthony Spiri's lilting, poetically alert playing of the piano accompaniments and the clean, analytical sounds of the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich under Andrés Orozco-Estrada – and it seems strange that in the *Rückert Lieder*, Spiri is left to realise the quasi-orchestral climax of 'Um Mitternacht' on piano alone, while 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden kommen' gets the full orchestral treatment (in a melting performance). Nor are the Schoenberg arrangements helped by a balance that places Bernarda Fink rather behind the 10-piece Gustav Mahler Ensemble.

Nevertheless, the Argentinian mezzo brings characteristically classy musicianship and intelligence to the task at hand. The voice is now more sinewy, a little more pushed at the extremes, and it can sound a touch underpowered in the middle register. But the concentration and integrity of the performances is often compelling, especially in a powerfully numb and affecting account of the *Kindertotenlieder*. With Fink's high-quality contribution at its centre, this unusual recital is well worth exploring. **Hugo Shirley**

Monteverdi

Vespro della Beata Vergine

Namur Chamber Choir; Cappella Mediterranea / Leonardo García Alarcón

Ambronay (F) ② AMY041 (88' • DDD • T/t)



This is in many ways a 'traditional' Monteverdi *Vespers*, carrying little in the way of musicological baggage. Performed in the published order with liturgical additions limited to short chant antiphons before the psalms, soloists interacting with a ripieno choir of 21, some extra instrumental doubling and a *Magnificat* at high pitch, its principal novelty is to have approached the problem of there being no set of chants both musically appropriate to the score and liturgically appropriate to any one feast day by selecting texts for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and then writing new, pastiche chant melodies

for them. They sound convincing enough to my inexpert ears; but more striking in any case is the manner in which they are sung, with Solesmes-style weediness rejected in favour of something more full-throatedly coloured by southern European, Byzantine and Muslim traditions. The results are described here as 'work in progress', but again sound plausible and sincere, as well as echoing something of the inflected exoticism of Monteverdi's vocal writing elsewhere.

Even so, it is probably not this that will decide listeners on the effectiveness of the performance. For that we have to consider the more fundamental matters of sound, interpretative skill and creative energy, and in all of these Leonardo García Alarcón and his forces score highly. Speeds are for the most part fast, yet never seem over-driven or scrambled – indeed, it is remarkable how effectively Alarcón manages successfully to marry his swift tempi in 'Deus in adjutorium', 'Lauda Jerusalem' or the 'Sonata sopra Sancta Maria' to alert and adroitly delivered rhythmic articulation and a satisfying weight of sound (boosted by an agile trombone department). Yet there are moments of tenderness too, tellingly employed as in the gentle, consolatory 'Amen' at the end of 'Dixit Dominus', or the 'Et misericordia' section of an otherwise purposefully driven *Magnificat*. The excellently sung solos, too, are islands of intimacy and poise. This is a *Vespers* that excites by the way it combines the immediacy and clarity of a smaller-scale performance with the sheer sonic thrill of a larger one, all in a pervading atmosphere of heartfelt but unhistrionic expressive urgency. **Lindsay Kemp**

Moody · Pärt

Moody Simeron Pärt Stabat mater

Zsuzsi Tóth *sop* Barnabás Hegyi *counterten*

Olivier Berten *ten* Goeyvaerts String Trio

Challenge Classics (F) CC72616 (53' • DDD)



The music of both Arvo Pärt and Ivan Moody is characterised by its directness, the sonic purity of its gestures. How paradoxical, then, that it should frequently spawn such cloudy, quasi-mystical commentary. Philippe Grisar's extended and meandering booklet-notes do this release no favours but they can't obscure the simple beauty of an exceptional recording. Ivan Moody's 2012 *Simeron* and Arvo Pärt's 1985 *Stabat mater* are a natural

pairing. Scored for string trio and three solo voices, both offer a musical meditation on faith and humanity.

Heard on disc for the first time, the Moody is typical of the composer's recent work – a distillation and crystallisation of a style that has become ever cleaner and more texturally refined. Setting the Greek text of the Byzantine Holy Week Rite and a sermon by Bishop Melito of Sardis, the work finds a harmonic astringency to balance its yielding, unbending instinct to melody. Chant meets human cries, ecstatic chorales break through scuttling chromatics in a performance whose precision and restraint only heighten its intensity.

The Goeyvaerts Trio and singers Zsuzsi Tóth, Barnabás Hegyi and Olivier Berten find something equally exciting in Pärt's well-trodden *Stabat mater*. Their recording is made using just intonation rather than equal temperament. What might sound like a gimmick exposes new colour in the composer's spare score, each note glowing with harmonics and overtones, voices and strings ringing like a struck bell. The Theatre of Voices recording has long been my go-to but this exquisite rethinking has displaced it. There's nothing stark or white about this musical purity, which finds kaleidoscopic depth in the narrowest of palettes. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Pärt – selected comparison:

Tb of Voices, Hillier (6/12) (HARM) HMU80 7553

Mozart

Requiem, K626

Genia Kühmeier *sop* Bernarda Fink *contr*

Mark Padmore *ten* Gerald Finley *bass*

Netherlands Radio Choir; Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

RCO Live (F) ② RCO14002 (48' • DDD/DSD • T/t)

Recorded live, September 14-16, 2011



In what amounts to a masterpiece of disastrous timing, Mariss Jansons's live (applause excised) Concertgebouw Mozart Requiem follows only a few weeks after the release of John Butt's version – unanimously welcomed, universally praised, *Gramophone*'s Recording of the Month in the May issue and a bookie's favourite for the Awards this year. It would be a shame indeed if the new disc were to be 'drowned out' by the acclaim generated by Butt's disc, for it is a fine and worthwhile performance in its own right.

It is what could be described as a 'choral society' Requiem: the approach is by and

large traditional, the edition used the standard Süssmayr. The cast of soloists could barely be equalled and the Netherlands Radio Choir are well disciplined, with hardly any sense of 'reaching' for top notes. Jansons's tempi are largely similar to Butt's, although he is slightly more expansive in slower movements – the 'Tuba mirum' and 'Recordare', for example; Gerald Finley is a commanding presence in the former, his cadenza imaginative and apt. The 'Quam olim Abrahae' fugue that closes the 'Domine Jesu Christe' is perhaps the only section that needed an extra injection of vim, never quite finding its tempo (the singers seem to want to push it forwards); the return of the same music following the 'Hostias' is subtly swifter and happier for it, and the addition of the deep organ pedal at 2'44" is a pleasing touch. Trombones, too, are more than a token presence throughout.

Quibbles are few: Genia Kühmeier misreads her part at 'ne perenni' in the 'Recordare' (at 4'25"), exactly the same spot at which Anna Prohaska made exactly the same mistake on Abbado's live Lucerne DVD (Accentus, 11/13). And 47'35" might be considered short measure at full price, even in glowing SACD sound. Apart from that, however, the only problem this issue has is the long shadow cast by John Butt and the Dunedin Consort. **David Threasher**

Selected comparison:

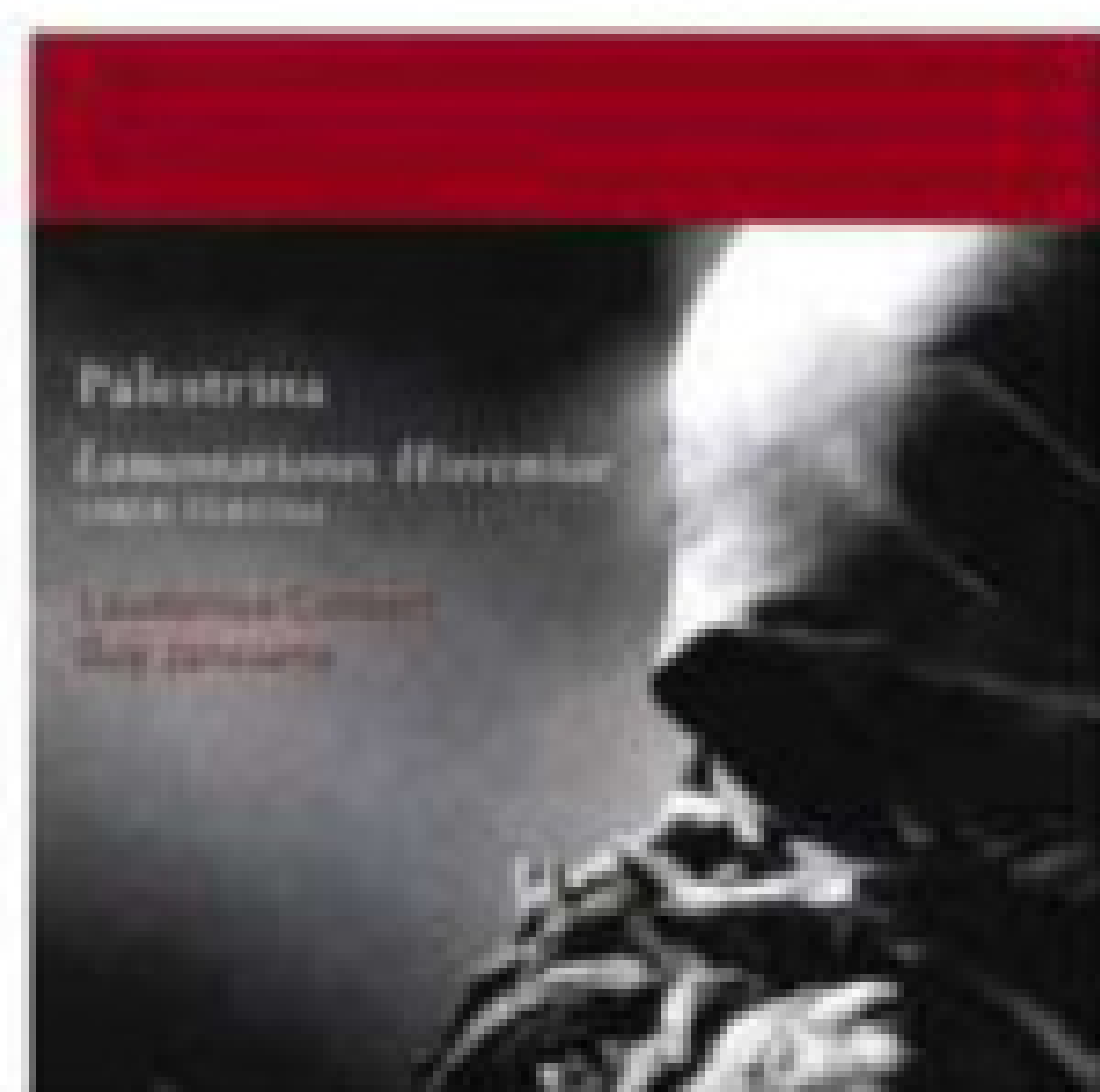
Dunedin Consort, Butt (5/14) (LINN) CKD449

Palestrina

Lamentationes Hieremiae – Book 3

Laudantes Consort / Guy Janssens

Sonamusica © ② SONA1311 (88' • DDD)



There's a restraint – and not just the enforced restraint of Tridentine edicts – to

Palestrina's four sets of Lamentations that cuts more deeply than any amount of anguished complexity. Whether this emerges from the astonishing texts themselves or from Palestrina's own recent encounters with grief (the works were composed shortly after the deaths of his brother, wife and two sons), the result is as richly evocative as the music itself is simple.

Recordings of Palestrina's Lamentations aren't in short supply. So what do Guy Janssens and his Belgian vocal ensemble the Laudantes Consort bring to the repertoire? The 14-strong group (which incidentally includes Currende's conductor Erik van Nevel in the bass section) have always had a

warmth to their blend, painting musically in pastels, a technique which adapts well here to Palestrina's sustained, chordal passages. The singers' delivery is unworked and almost entirely without vibrato, an approach which lends a wonderful certainty and sense of anchor to the lower voices. In the upper voices it risks naivety and dulls the bladed edge you find in recordings by The Tallis Scholars or Nordic Voices – partly a function of lower key choices.

Under Janssens, however, they shape every phrase with the greatest care. The opening 'Incipit' blossoms from nothing in barely perceptible increments, as though the choir can hardly bear to begin their tale of the 'desolate city'. The Second Lesson for Holy Saturday is another perfectly judged musical drama, starting with fragility ('How the gold has grown dim') before taking on more declamatory energy and striking rhythms harder as the poet gains confidence and even anger.

Whether or not this is a set of Lamentations worth buying very much depends on how you listen and use them. These are softly unobtrusive interpretations that encourage meditation, letting ear and mind wander, cushioned by this certainty of the choral sound. For anyone preferring a more confrontational treatment, one that demands attention and urges narrative over more generalised emotional states, I'd look elsewhere. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Selected comparisons:

Nordic Voices (12/09) (CHAN) CHAN0763

Tallis Scholars, Phillips (GIME) CDGIM204

A Panufnik • R Panufnik

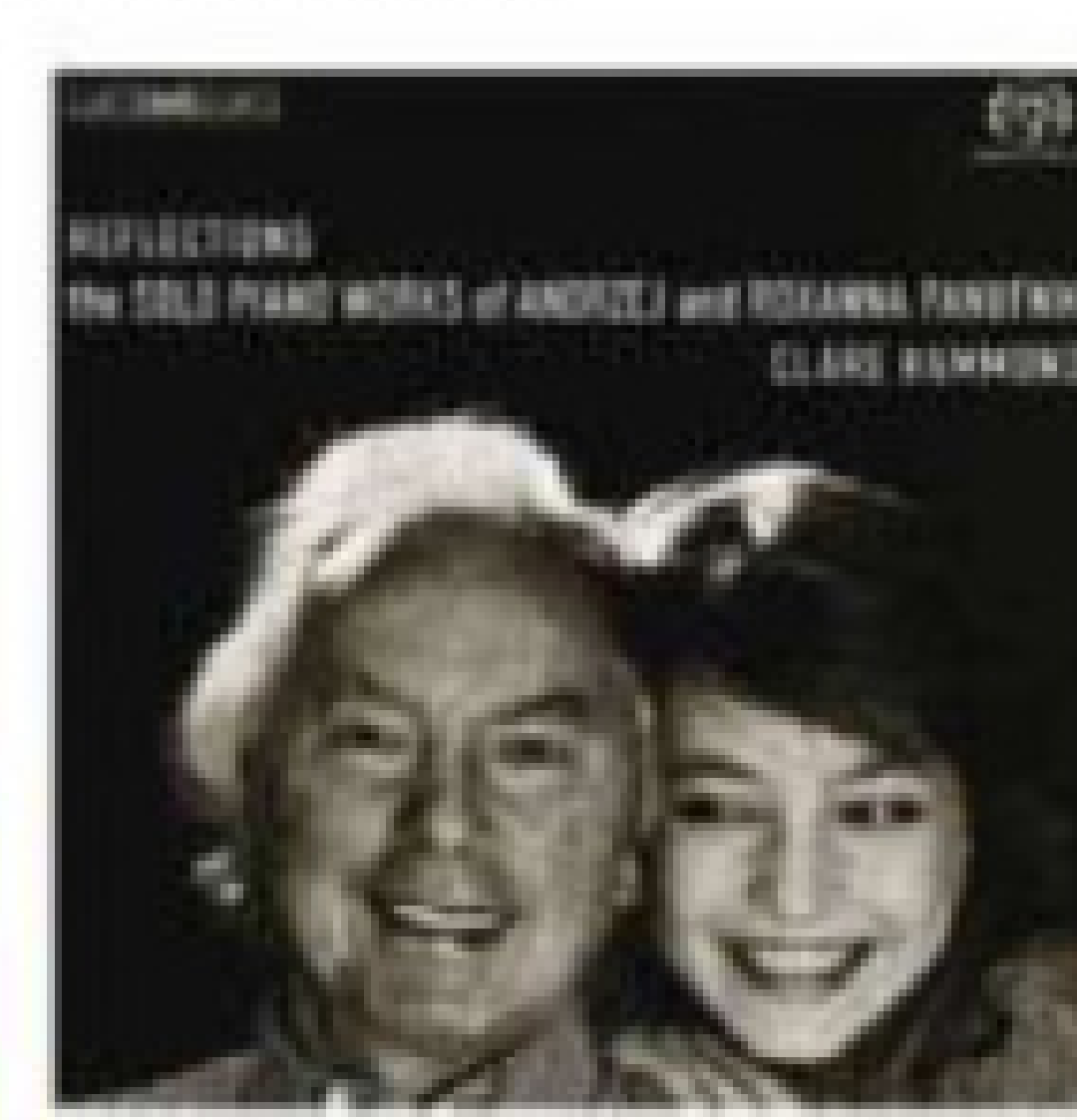
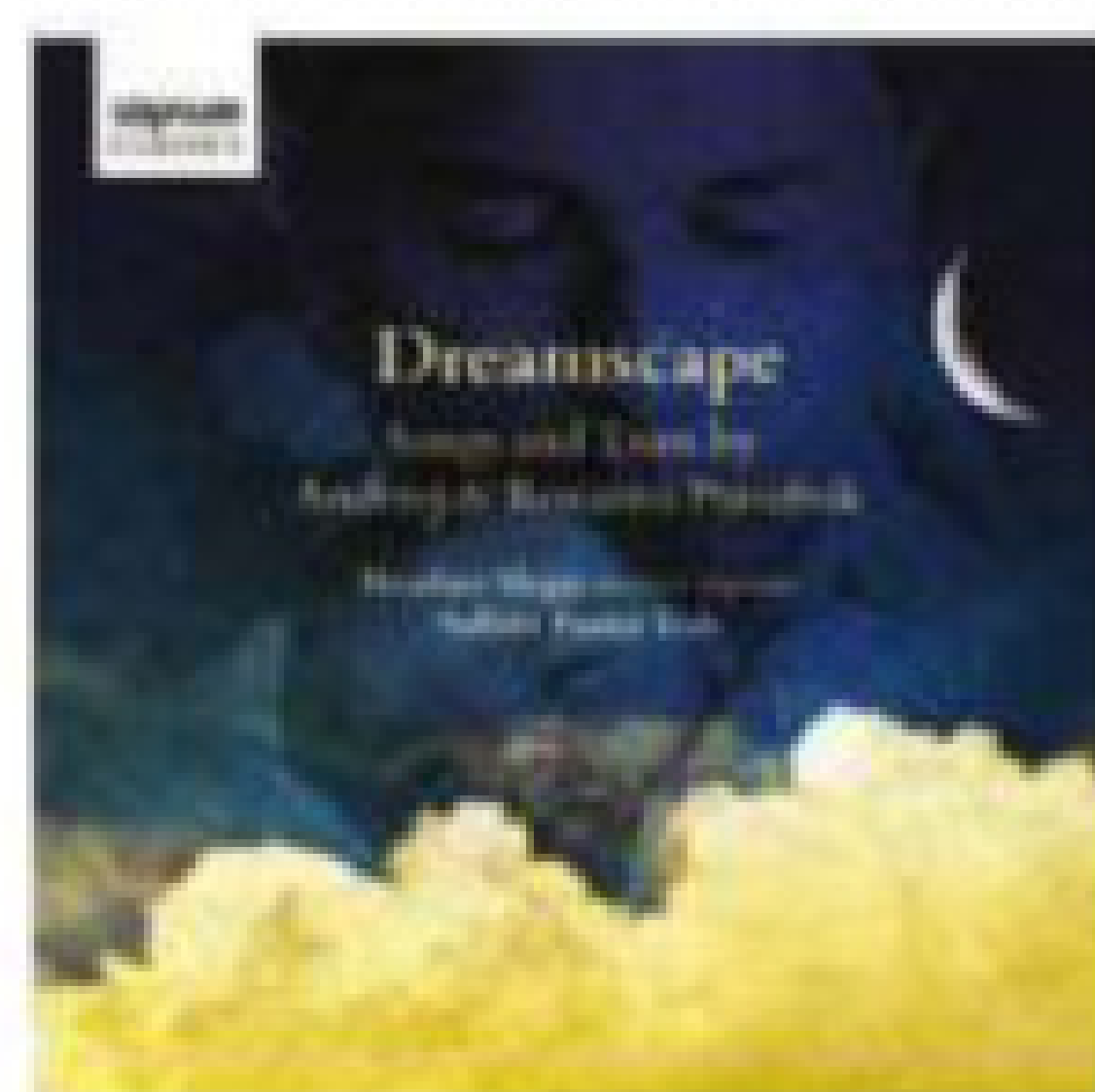
'Dreamscape'

A Panufnik Love Song. Dreamscape. Piano Trio, Op 1 **R Panufnik** Mine Eye. Sweet love remember'd. That mighty heart. Virtue. Around Three Corners **A Panufnik/R Panufnik** Modlitwa **Heather Shipp** *sop* **Subito Piano Trio** Signum © SIGCD380 (64' • DDD • T/t)

A Panufnik • R Panufnik

'Reflections'

A Panufnik Twelve Miniature Studies. Pentasonata. Reflections **R Panufnik** Second Home. Glo **A Panufnik/R Panufnik** Modlitwa. Hommage à Chopin – three movts **Clare Hammond** *pf* BIS © BIS2003 (71' • DDD/DSD)



Two fascinating and quite different discs of music by the two Panufniks, father and

daughter. 'Dreamscape' is a beautifully conceived collection of songs and chamber music. It begins with Panufnik senior's gorgeous, touching 'Love Song', in the version for piano and voice, a decidedly hard act to follow, but Roxanna Panufnik's note points to the innate similarities between her musical instincts and those of her father, in terms of both harmony and love of Elizabethan texts. Certainly her two Shakespeare settings really seem all of a piece with his work, an interesting phenomenon given her conscious attempt for so many years to keep as far from his style as possible (again, as she mentions in the notes). Her Herbert setting, 'Virtue', is similarly accomplished but I initially thought that Wordsworth (in 'That mighty heart') might have been a miscalculated choice of poet. I was wrong – the stately tread of the evocation of London is suddenly and beautifully elevated by the melisma on 'air' and the conclusion of the song floats to rest on that same air. *Modlitwa* is particularly interesting, being a joint composition, the first verse of this prayer in the Polish language composed by Roxanna to match her father's setting of the second, and there is no sense of stylistic dissonance at all.

I well remember Andrzej's ethereal *Dreamscape* in the vocal version performed by Meriel and Peter Dickinson but like Roxanna, and, it seems, her mother, I find the instrumental version as recorded here much preferable. The disc ends with two piano trios, *Around Three Corners* by Roxanna, and Andrzej's Op 1 Trio. The former is enigmatic, the latter heart-on-sleeve; in fact, it's a work of utterly arresting beauty that should be standard repertoire. Performances throughout are excellent.

The BIS recording brings together some outstanding piano music by Panufnik senior, stunningly performed by Clare Hammond, and recent work by his daughter as well a couple of 'retrospective collaborations', including a solo piano version of the *Modlitwa* heard on the Signum disc. Andrzej's dazzling skill and imagination is immediately apparent in the wonderful *Twelve Miniature Studies* (1947, rev 1955/64) that opens the recital. Why this 20-minute set, full of invention, beauty and excitement, is not in the repertoire of more pianists is a mystery.

Hommage à Chopin is an arrangement by Roxanna of three of Andrzej's five vocalises of that name for solo piano, and they are truly haunting, as is the transcription of *Modlitwa*. The late *Pentasonata* is relatively well known but a performance as vivacious and, at the same time, as attentive to detail

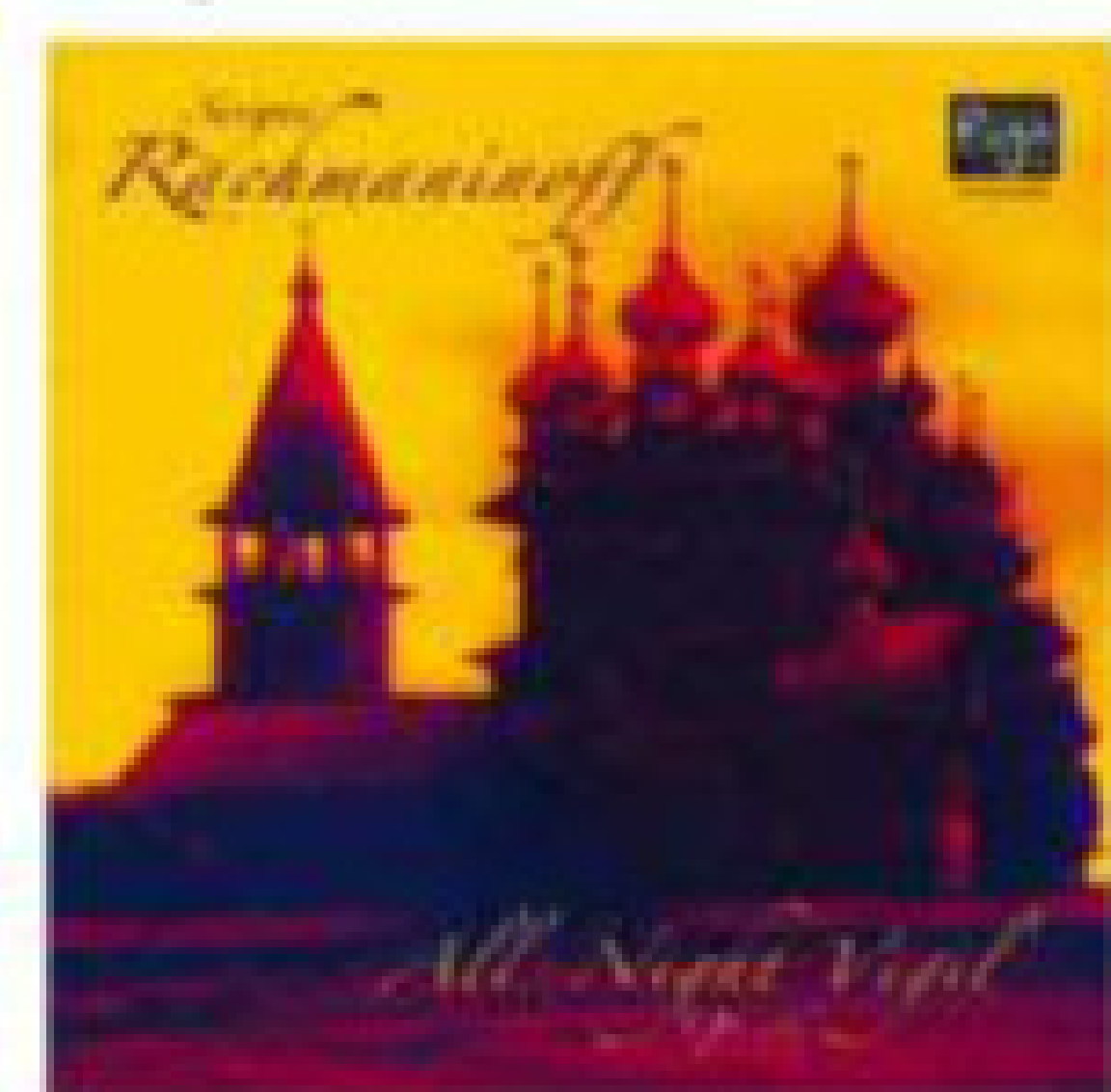
as Hammond's makes one listen to it as though for the first time – BIS's superb production also plays its part in this. *Reflections*, from 1968, is grittier but the musical and philosophical preoccupations are essentially the same, and Hammond is as convincing in the earlier style as in the later. Between these two works come Roxanna's *Second Home* and *Glo*. The way Hammond plays the opening repeated notes of *Second Home* would alone be worth the price of the disc. **Ivan Moody**

Rachmaninov

Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op 37

Key Ensemble / Teemu Honkanen

Fuga © FUGA9353 (55' • DDD)



How low can you go? To a choral director considering the *All-Night Vigil* this is,

perhaps, the paramount question. Although the score demands a good number of low Cs and B flats, this new recording takes things further, with stupendous results.

This astonishing piece is just a year shy of its centenary and this is the fourth new recording to have been reviewed in these pages in the past year. The 30 singers of the Key Ensemble from Turku in Finland produce a gloriously rounded tone which has a great inner strength without becoming hard-edged or coarse. Despite the resonant acoustic of the 15th-century church of St Lawrence in Mynämäki, and being placed some distance from the choir, the microphone captures a richly nuanced performance, with crystalline diction and crisp, accented rhythms.

Teemu Honkanen's interpretation is also emotionally spacious and full of lovely moments. In the second movement, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul', the upper voices undulate gently with some gracious *portamentos*, while, by contrast, almost shouting their fervent, ecstatic 'Alleluias' in the ninth. The 'Nunc dimittis' with its slowly tolling bells is simply sublime.

Tenor soloist Mats Lillhannus is also the recording's engineer and does an exquisite job on both counts. The best reason to buy this disc, though, is to encounter the contra-bass notes of Reino Kotaviita, who ventures beyond Rachmaninov's score to a staggering bottom A flat and a G. This must be the top choice. **Malcolm Riley**

Schubert

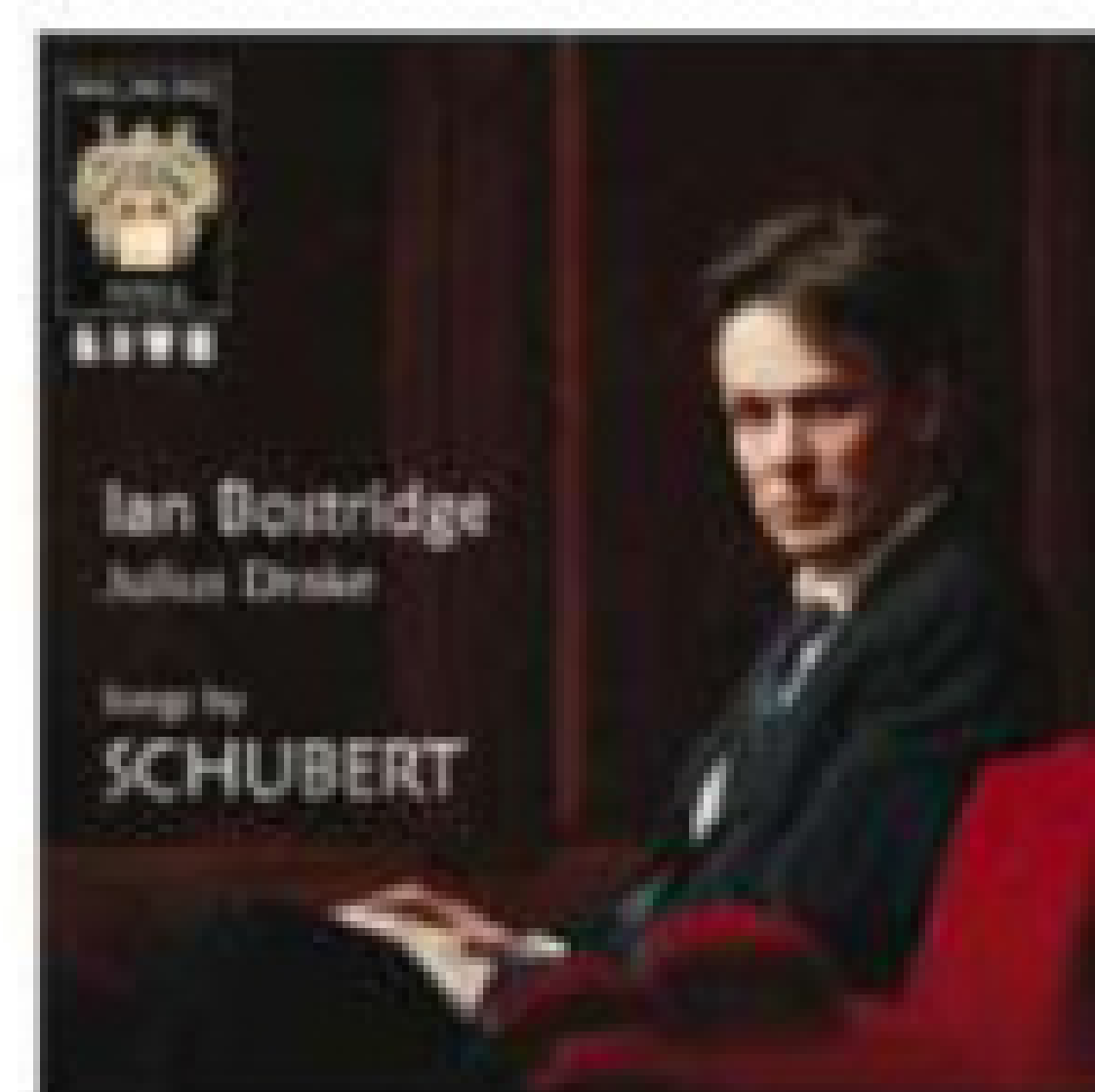
Abendstern, D806. Alinde, D904. An den Mond – D259; D296. Auf der Donau, D553. Auflösung, D807. Geheimes, D719. Gondelfahrer, D808. Die

Götter Griechenlands, D677. Lied eines Schiffers an die Dioskuren, D360. Nachtstück, D672. Rastlose Liebe, D138. Die Sterne, D939. Der Strom, D565. Versunken, D715. Viola, D786. Widerschein, D949. Die Winterabend, D938

Ian Bostridge *ten* Julius Drake *pf*

Wigmore Hall Live (M) WHLIVE0067 (73' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live, September 13, 2013



From a marketing standpoint, the presence of a dozen or so Ian Bostridge

Schubert discs might suggest a saturation point. Yet this collection, discretely titled 'Songs by Schubert', welcomely documents another Bostridge foray into the Schubert fly-over zone – those vast regions of Lieder that lie between his dozen or so most popular items and his great, later-period song-cycles.

This one most notably showcases the songs that Schubert wrote on verses by his friend and mentor Johann Mayrhofer, whose 1836 suicide is no surprise after contemplating the songs featured here. Songs such as 'Auf der Donau' begin with a familiar, even pleasurable scene and end up in a very ominous danger zone. Other poets are represented by more bleak efforts, such as Friedrich von Schiller's existential probing in 'Die Götter Griechenlands', in which the long-gone gods of antiquity are a point of bleak existential contemplation.

Schubert's response to such brooding literary flights shows in invention unlike his more casual, chipper efforts or his distilled mastery in the later song-cycles. The tragically jilted bride in 'Viola' is characterised over a many-themed 13 minutes. In contrast, the Goethe setting 'Geheimes' is a model of pared-back composition, with two chords rocking back and forth. Also, few discs outside of a complete anthology would place, side by side, Schubert's two versions of the Goethe 'An den Mond' written four years apart (interesting because the first version is better).

Much of this repertoire is hard to sustain. Of course, one must be willing to enter Bostridge's world, which is now a highly familiar network of interpretative techniques – vocal quivers, soaring outbursts, etc – if one is to gain any enjoyment in these seldom-travelled musical paths. He's in excellent voice here and never so heedless as to be mannered. He's particularly keen to conjure visual images in songs such as 'Der Winterabend'. And then there's Julius Drake, who so clearly charts the progression of Schubert's

musical thoughts, especially when the composer radically varies any given gesture with the change of only a single note.

David Patrick Stearns

R Strauss

'Heimliche Aufforderung'

Acht Lieder aus letzte Blätter, Op 10 – No 1, Zueignung; No 3, Die Nacht; No 4, Die Georgine; No 5, Geduld; No 8, Allerseelen. Fünf Lieder, Op 15 – No 1, Madrigal; No 5, Heimkehr. Ständchen, Op 17 No 2. Vier Lieder, Op 27 – No 3, Heimliche Aufforderung; No 4, Morgen. Traum durch die Dämmerung, Op 29 No 1. Vier Lieder, Op 36 – No 1, Das Rosenband; No 3, Hat gesagt – bleibt's nicht dabei. Fünf Lieder, Op 39 – No 1, Leises Lied; No 4, Befreit. Am Ufer, Op 41 No 3. Freundliche Vision, Op 48 No 1. Drei Lieder der Ophelia, Op 67. Ich wollt ein Sträusslein binden, Op 68 No 2. Alphorn, WoO29^a. Begegnung, AV72. Malven, AV304

Christiane Karg *sop* Felix Klieser *hn*

Malcolm Martineau *pf*

Berlin Classics © 0300566BC (72' • DDD)



After Thomas Hampson's recital disc last month, this will do nicely as a contrasting

offering for Strauss's 150th anniversary. Christiane Karg has not ventured far into Strauss opera so far, but we can tell which roles will suit her best from this thoughtfully varied programme of songs. The demure, light touch of 'Leises Lied' provides a glimpse of her Sophie (she started the year with *Der Rosenkavalier* for Flanders Opera) and her capricious singing in 'Ich wollt ein Sträusslein binden' is surely a Zerbinetta in the making.

The disc intersperses some of the best-known Strauss songs with a generous handful of rarer items. There is a danger that a solo recital will become tiring when a soprano voice is consistently on the bright side but Karg softens the tone where she can – a silvery shimmer of moonlight is cast over 'Die Nacht', though 'Traum durch die Dämmerung' lacks the sunset glow it needs. In general, Karg and Malcolm Martineau are reluctant to linger, keeping 'Morgen' under four minutes and 'Befreit' just under five, so everything stays light and fluent, playing to the singer's strengths. It is good to have the rarely heard 'Alphorn', with its solo horn obbligato (Felix Klieser), and towards the end Karg paints a vivid portait in the three half-crazed *Ophelia Lieder*. A rewarding disc, though there are some great Strauss sopranos of the past – Janowitz, Price, Norman – also beckoning from the wings. **Richard Fairman**

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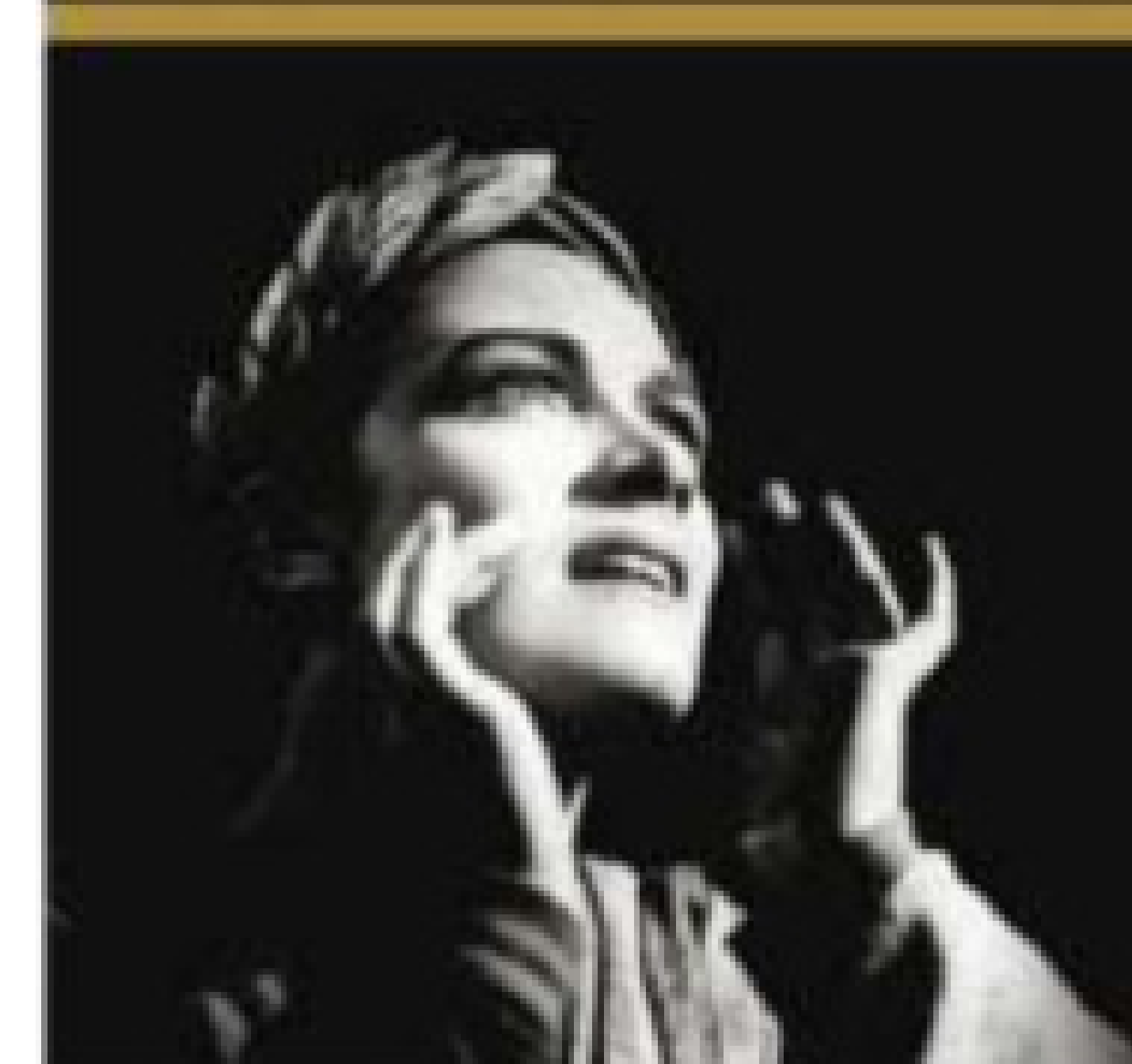


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Collegium Vocale 1704;

Collegium 1704 / Václav Luks

Supraphon © SU4160-2 (56' • DDD)



Zelenka's reputation has been considerably rehabilitated, not least thanks to Václav Luks

and Collegium 1704. This time they explore some of the obscurest nooks and crannies of their compatriot's *stile antico* church music, probably written for the Catholic court chapel at Dresden. Three of his 10 settings of the Marian text *Sub tuum praesidium* are interspersed with premiere recordings of Mass movements, but these pieces in a deliberately antique style are only part of a broader programme that presents music by two more Bohemian disciples of the influential theorist, composer and teacher Fux.

A pair of violins provides a pleasing contrast of texture and mood for a trio sonata by Johann Georg Orschler (1698–c1770) but the most substantial piece is a setting of the *Stabat mater* by František Ignác Antonín Tůma (1704–74), set in G minor for four voices and basso continuo; Collegium Vocale 1704's single voices create a plangently gorgeous and sensitively articulated performance, which comes as no surprise when the vocal ensemble includes experienced soprano Hana Blažiková and bass Tomáš Král. The elements of 'choral' lamentation, surprisingly *galant* passages and solemn fugues are revealed beautifully and accompanied with tastefulness by a continuo group that varies its colours unobtrusively. **David Vickers**

Turina

Canto a Sevilla, Op 37^a. **Danzas gitanas**, Op 55. **La procesión del rocío**, Op 9. **Rapsodia sinfónica**, Op 66^b

^a**María Espada** sop ^b**Martin Roscoe** pf

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Juanjo Mena

Chandos © CHAN10819 (69' • DDD • T/t)



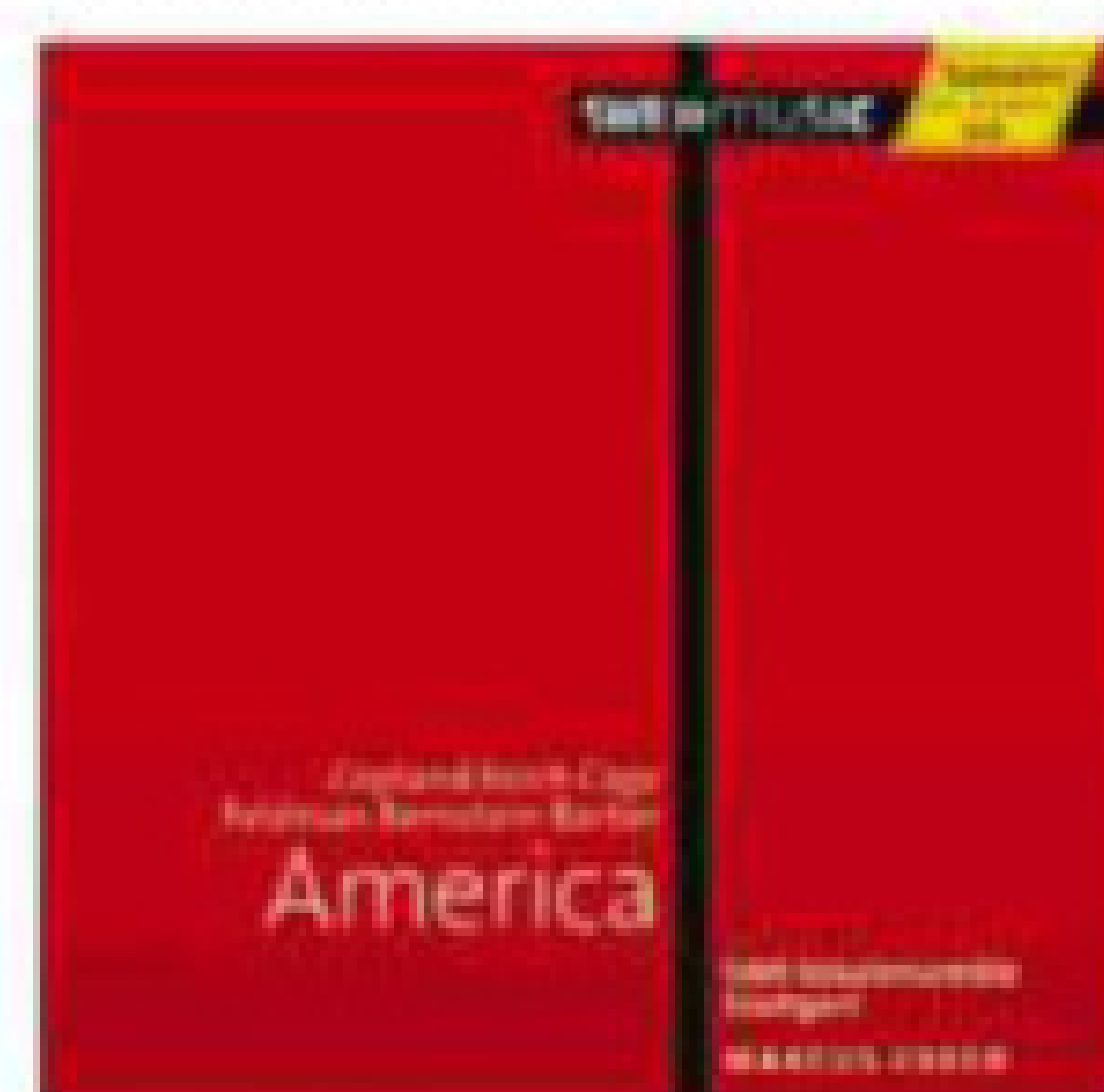
Juanjo Mena and the BBC Philharmonic continue their exploration of the

Spanish repertoire with this programme pinpointing Turina's Andalusian roots. However, listening to his *Rapsodia sinfónica* for piano and strings, a fairly late work of 1931, you are reminded that in his early years Turina studied in Paris, where Debussy held sway. While the music has a distinctive, ripe Spanish aroma, on occasion there are reminiscences of a Gallic finesse in texture, harmony and turns of phrase and, indeed, of the ways in which French composers of the early 20th century evoked a Spanish atmosphere. It makes for an attractive amalgam, particularly here with Martin Roscoe as a pianist who recognises the sophistication as well as the rhythmic robustness of the piano-writing.

The fact that Turina was a skilled orchestrator is manifest throughout this disc in performances of *La procesión del rocío* and the *Danzas gitanas* that have a shifting, subtle spectrum of colour delineating the music's light and shade, its sunshine and louring clouds, its sensuality and sinew. What might come across as irksome motivic tics are woven into a rich, multifaceted fabric, no more so than in the *Canto a Sevilla*, a work that Victoria de los Angeles made her own. María Espada adds a luminous glow to this homage to Seville in all its mystery and magic, exuberance and eerie phantasms. **Geoffrey Norris**

'America'

Barber A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map, Op 15
Bernstein Missa brevis **Cage** Five **Copland** Four
Motets **Feldman** Rothko Chapel **Reich** Proverb
SWR Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart / Marcus Creed
Hänssler Classic © CD93 306 (78' • DDD • T/t)



This is a fastidious selection of American music, blending the known and unknown, from an outstanding choir. Copland's *Four Motets* to texts from the Psalms were student pieces written in 1921 for his teacher Nadia Boulanger, who much admired them, but they weren't published until 1979. Although the mature Copland is vestigial, sung like this they're impressive. Another rarity is *A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map*, a poem by Stephen Spender set for male voices and timpani by Barber in 1940; its subject of a soldier killed in the Spanish Civil War made it topical.

The most substantial work is Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* for solo viola, discreet percussion and voices. Written in 1971, it's almost a funeral march for Rothko, who took his own life the year before. It's easy to imagine those huge near-blank canvasses

round the walls of the chapel at Houston. Interestingly this is not the first recording of *Rothko Chapel* by the SWR Vocal Ensemble, since it was on their all-Feldman disc in 2001. The new version takes three minutes longer but it's one of Feldman's most accessible pieces – eloquent viola-writing and voices alternating mesmerically with percussion. Nobody else could have written it. That's also true of Bernstein's *Missa brevis* and the Reich and Cage works which complete an outstanding anthology, superbly performed: booklet-notes short on information. **Peter Dickinson**

Rothko Chapel – selected comparison:

SWR Voc Ens, Huber (1/02) (HANS) CD93 023

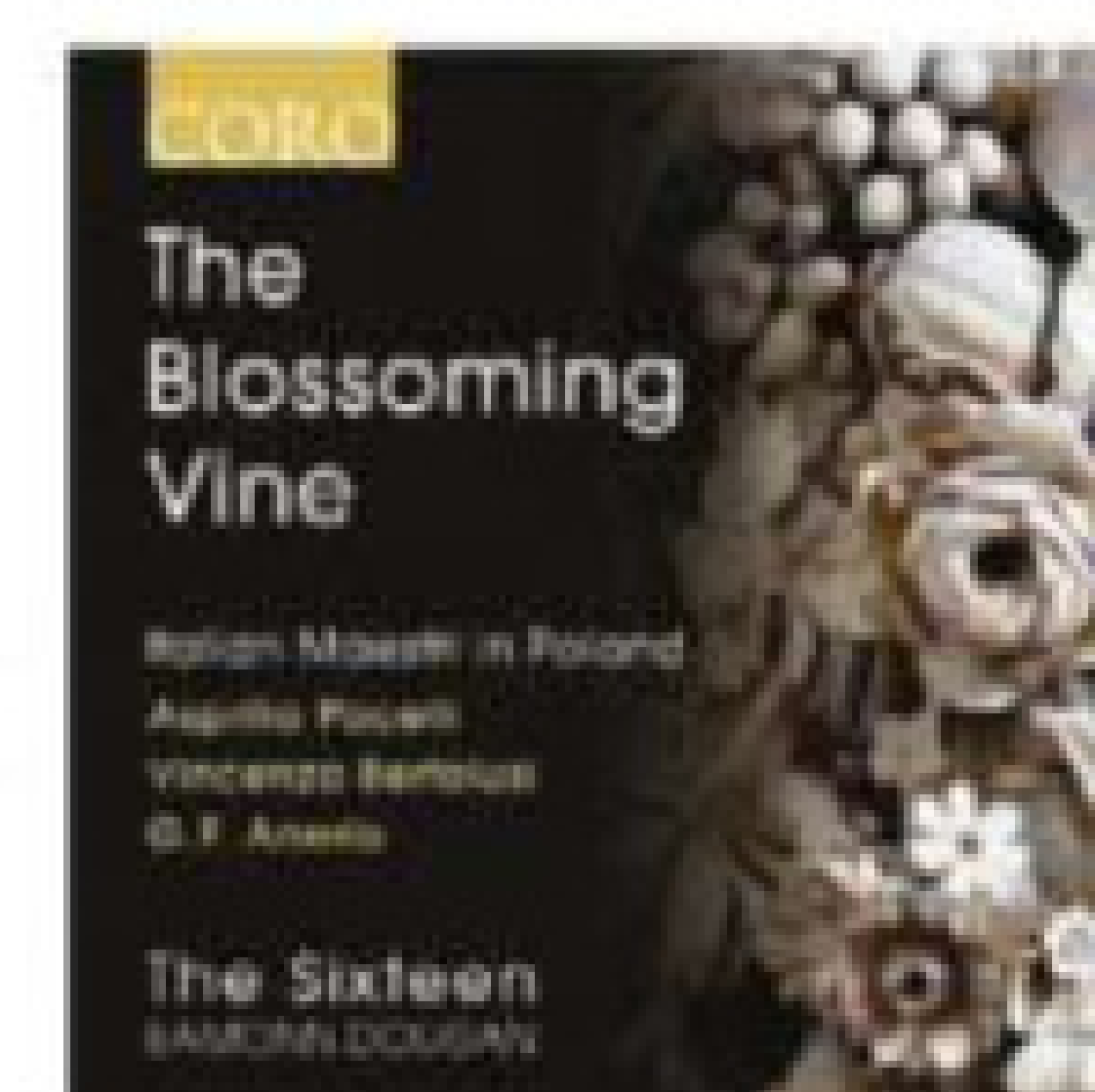
'The Blossoming Vine'

'Italian Maestri in Poland'

Anerio Litanía deiparae Virginis. Missa
Pulchra es. Salve regina **Bertolusi** Ego
flos campi. Osculetur me osculo. Regina
caeli **Pacelli** Beata es Virgo Maria. Dum
esset Rex. Veni sponsa Christi

The Sixteen / Eamonn Dougan

Coro © CORO16123 (62' • DDD • T/t)



The first disc in The Sixteen's Polish Baroque series explored the mid-17th-century music of Bartłomiej Pękiel (9/13). The second takes us a little further back in time to Pękiel's Italian predecessors at the court of King Sigismund III, whose influence would so fundamentally shape the nation's musical development.

It is likely that both Asprilio Pacelli and Giovanni Anerio studied with Palestrina, and his is very much the sound world we find ourselves in here, one of post-Tridentine directness and poise. Anerio's double-choir *Missa Pulchra es* forms the backbone of the disc. This attractive if occasionally rather anonymous setting has its highlight in an unusually striking *Credo* which climaxes in a reduced-forces 'Crucifixus' section of exquisite loveliness.

Hailing from Venice, Vincenzo Bertolusi contributes two contrasting motets: the declamatory and dancing *Regina caeli* and the gauzy, long-limbed imitation of *Ego flos campi*. But it is Pacelli who is responsible for the disc's treasure, the nine-minute *Dum esset rex*. Here, single voices replace thicker choral textures, with forces divided into five four-voice choirs. The result blends monumental architecture and athletic polychoral energy with a sensuousness born of the text, lavishing the poet's 'beloved' with every possible musical caress.

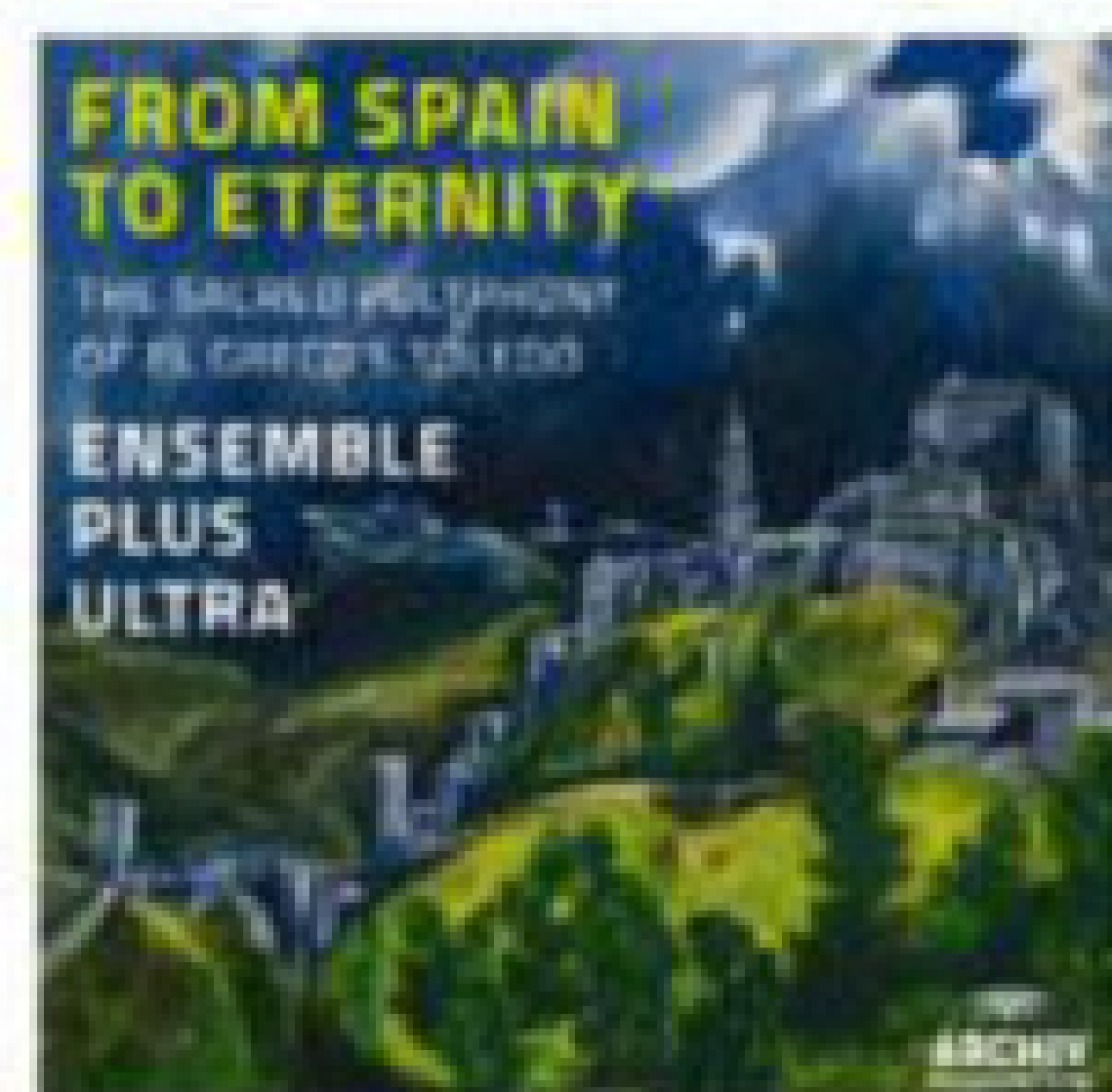
All the disc's motets are Marian in theme, whether explicitly or in the fragrant metaphors of the Song of Songs. This might be the root cause of a certain sameness of mood throughout. The performances are beautifully balanced and blended but there's a soft-focus gloss to it all that, while it suits these delicate texts, would occasionally benefit from the contrast of more bracing textural clarity and rhythmic impetus. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'From Spain to Eternity'

'The Sacred Polyphony of El Greco's Toledo' **Guerrero** Prudentes virgines **Lobo** Ave, regina coelorum. Missa Prudentes virgines. Versus est in luctum **Morales** Clamabat autem mulier Chananea. Expandit Sion manus suas. Quanti mercenarii **Tejeda** Miserere mei, Deus. Rex autem David

Ensemble Plus Ultra

Archiv   479 2610AH (71' • DDD • T/t)



Never mind the title: like the Lobo recording from La Grande Chapelle

(Lauda, 3/14), this new offering takes its inspiration from turn-of-17th-century Toledo and its resident genius, the painter El Greco. Both projects feature Lobo's fine Mass on Guerrero's motet *Prudentes virgines*, a work whose canonic workings earned high praise for its composer.

All four composers featured on this recording worked in Toledo over the space of some 80 years. *Versa est in luctum* is sung with a poise and restraint. If for his Mass I prefer La Grande Chapelle's interpretation, Plus Ultra's exploration of Lobo's musical environment is attractive and persuasive. Morales, in particular, is a composer whose music is always worth hearing. In his excellent notes, Michael Noone points out that his Lamentations (part of which are included here) continued to be sung in Toledo 50 years after his death. It's easy to hear why, for here he brings out the best in Plus Ultra. His distant successor, Alonso de Tejeda, is represented by a couple of penitential motets. Lobo's *Ave, regina caelorum* concludes this enjoyable disc on a more optimistic note. **Fabrice Fitch**

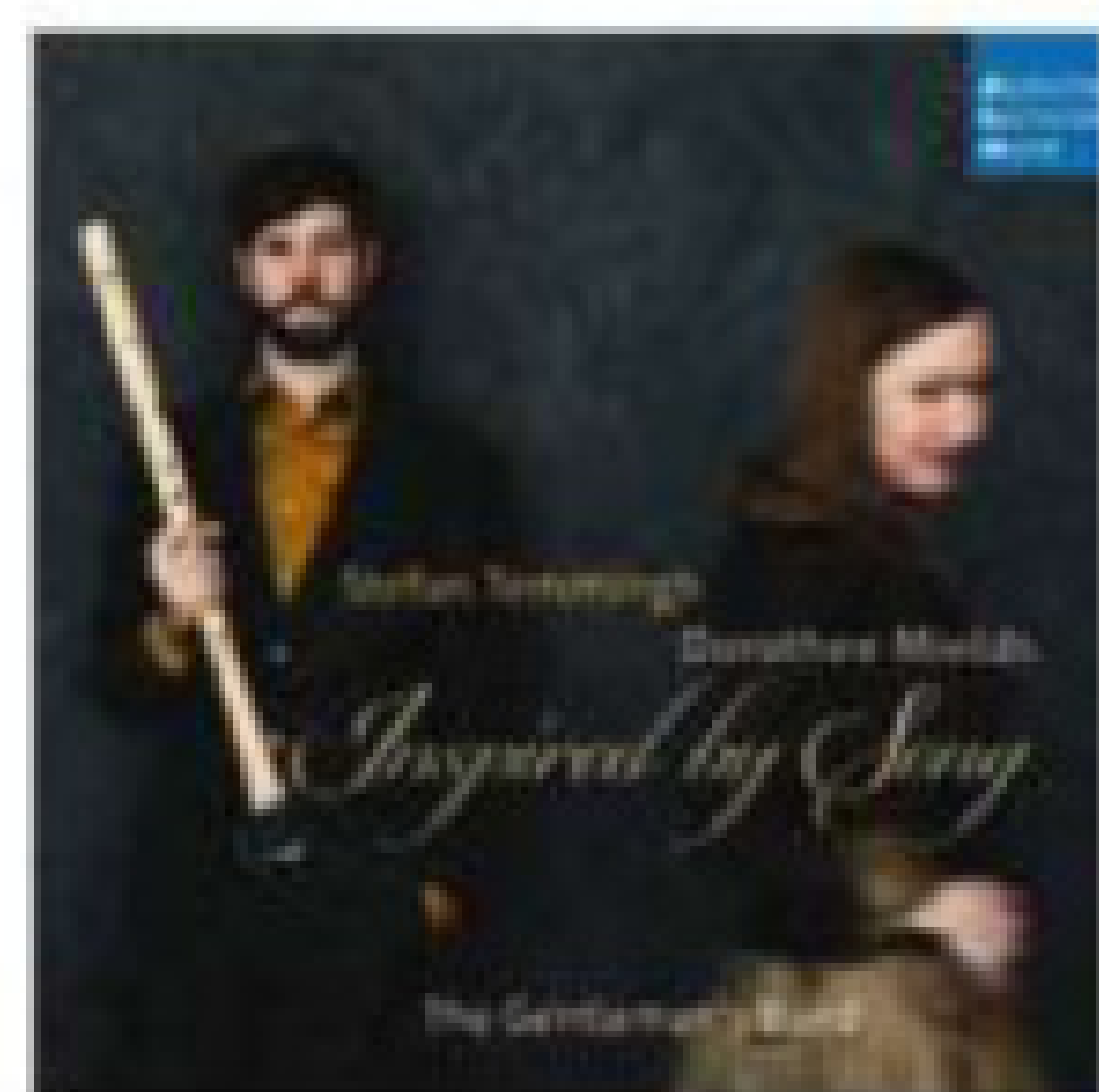
'Inspired by Song'

Dowland Flow my teares **S Eccles** Divisions upon a ground **Van Eyck** Engels nachtegaeltje. Doen Daphne d'over schoone Maeght **Geminiani** Lady Ann Bothwel's Lament. An Irish Tune **Nussen** Can Love be controul'd? **Pepusch** Can Love be controul'd by advice? **Purcell** Dido

and Aeneas – When I am laid in earth **Schop** Lacrimae Pavan **Traditional** John come kiss me now. Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament. When Daphne did from fair Phoebus fly. Faronells Ground. Greensleeves **d'Urfey** The King's Health, to Farrinel's Ground

Dorothee Mields sop

The Gentleman's Band / Stefan Temmingh rec Deutsche Harmonia Mundi   88843 04458-2 (58' • DDD • T)



In his last release, 'The Gentleman's Flute' (2/11), Stefan Temmingh focused

on the kind of music experienced by the middle-class mainstream of 18th-century Britain, as opposed to the more rarefied reaches of the court and aristocracy, by offering Handel opera arias as they were served up in 18th-century commercial instrumental arrangements. Here he turns to popular song. His plan is simple: take a song well known to 18th-century ears – 'Greensleeves', say, or Dowland's 'Flow my teares', or an outright folksy number like 'John come kiss me now' – and pair it with a contemporary instrumental treatment.

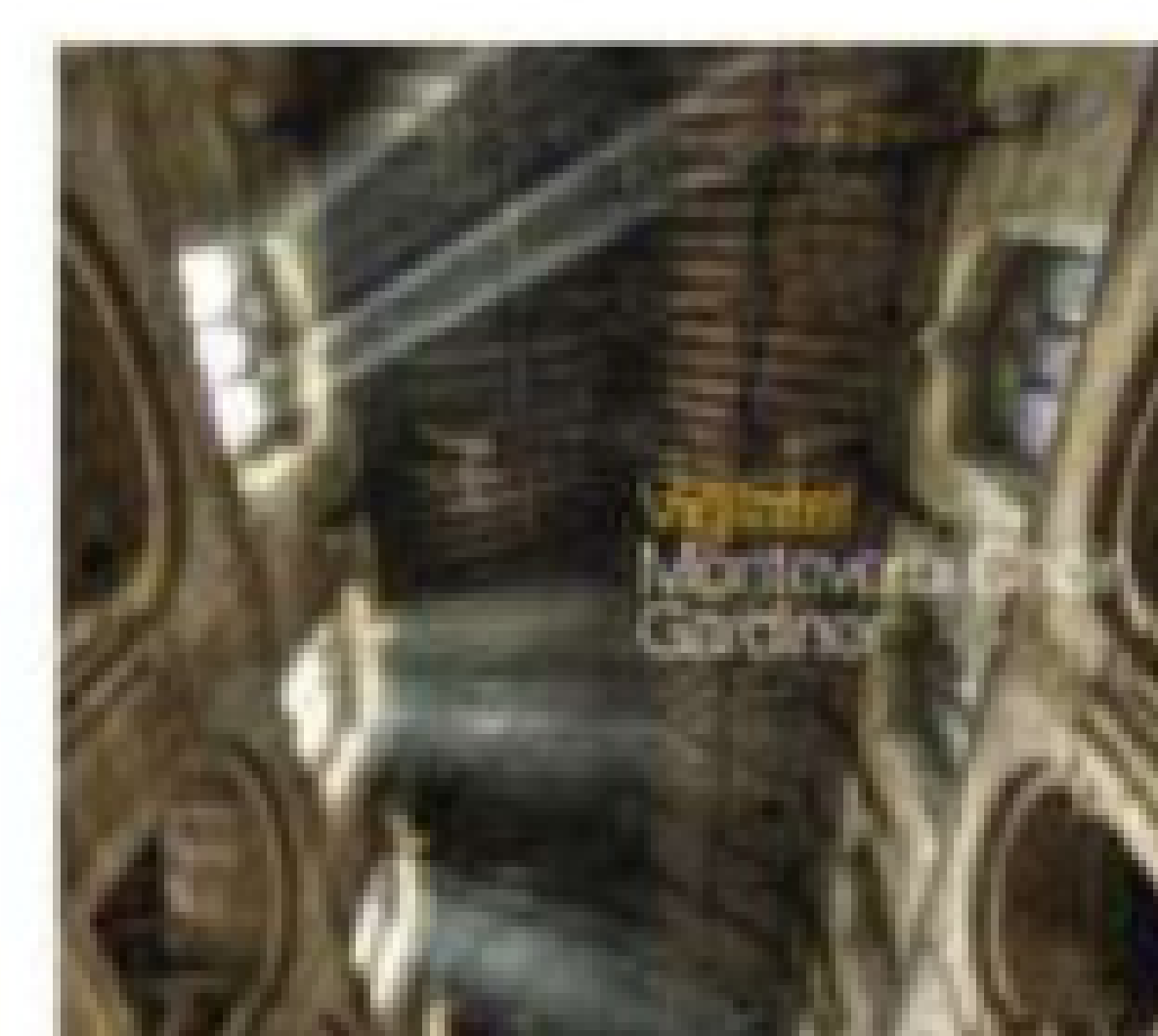
In the nature of things, these are often variation sets, such as the vigorous goings-over Geminiani gives to 'Lady Ann Bothwel's Lament' and 'An Irish Tune', or Van Eyck's haunting solo recorder version of the ever-sweet 'Daphne'. They are great tunes of course, and in truth the musical strength and interest often comes more from that than from the quality of the variations, but the full-toned virtuosity of Temmingh's recorder and the creative musicality of his accompanying continuo band (haunting guitar from Rolf Lislevand in 'Lady Ann Bothwel', and elsewhere effective use of Margret Koell's harp) make for an entertaining and often affecting programme.

The songs are sung by the German soprano Dorothee Mields, whose voice is more in English early-music style than English folk but whose performances are secure and intelligent, with a beguiling slight flutter. Some more English coaching would have been welcome though: her accent is not too badly evident and I'm sure most singers would struggle to get out all the text in d'Urfey's wordy satire 'The King's Health', but some words ('prog' for 'prig', 'wife' for 'wise') are simply wrong. A fine singer, she is at her best in the Dowland and a moving rendition of Dido's Lament that ends the programme – a show-stopper, as always.

Lindsay Kemp

'Vigilate!'

'English Polyphony in Dangerous Times' **Byrd** Civitas sancti tui. Justorum animae. Laudibus in sanctis. Nunc dimittis. Turn our captivity, O Lord. Vigilate **Morley** Nolo mortem peccatoris **Philips** Ecce vicit Leo **Tallis** O nata lux de lumine. Suscipe quaeso Domine **Tomkins** Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom **White** Christe qui lux est et dies. Lamentations for six voices **Monteverdi** Choir / **John Eliot Gardiner** Soli Deo Gloria   SDG720 (78' • DDD • T/t)



It is rare nowadays for the Monteverdi Choir to venture as early as the English

Renaissance; and it is equally rare to hear a motet recital of this period sung by an ensemble that is so audibly a mixed choir with a forceful personality at the helm. This is potentially a very positive attribute; at any rate it makes a change from the conformity of interpretation observable in this repertory in particular. Certain decisions regarding dynamics or articulation (the nearly constant *piano* for Byrd's *Civitas sancti tui* or the clipped *staccato* of Peter Philips's *Ecce vicit Leo*) are applied with a single-mindedness almost startlingly out of the ordinary.

Refreshing on one level, this very directed approach seems a throwback to another age, except in terms of the singers' vocal technique. Tallis's *Suscipe quaeso Domine* calls attention to an inherent pitfall: while in homophonic passages phrasing and articulation are very incisive, in denser polyphonic sections one senses hesitancy, as though the singers were uncertain how far to shape their own lines within or against the prevailing dynamic. The ending is surprisingly scrappy. White's set of Lamentations is similarly tentative. At the reduced verse 'Omnis populus eius', and even more at 'O vos omnes', tempi seem too slow for the soloists to shape their lines effectively. When the full ensemble enters, the exaggerated elocution at 'in die irae furoris sui' underlines the lack of definition of what precedes. The choir is at its most assured when contrapuntal lines tend in the same direction or when homophony prevails. The concluding 'Amen' of Tomkins's *Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom* does conclude the recital with a ravishing vignette. And speaking of bookends, the label's sumptuous production values extend to some stunningly evocative photographs of woodcarving from 15th-century churches.

Fabrice Fitch

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

HAYDN'S SCOTTISH SONGS

Nalen Anthoni listens to three discs of selections from Haydn's huge late output of folksong arrangements



Intelligent and lucid: Werner Gura's take on Haydn's settings of texts offered him by Scot William Napier

You could say that the background to Haydn and Scotland began with a hoax, James Macpherson's 1760s English translations of Ossian, a third-century Irish warrior-bard. He was real but his so-called poetry read in Germany, even impressing Goethe, was a figment of Macpherson's imagination, a lie that led to what was named Celtic-Germanic 'primitivism'. 'Haydn was an active participant' in this new craze 'that defined and championed a controlled wildness and naturalism in art' (Matthew Head). The craze? Scottish songs, secular, earthy, usually strophic, attached to mostly anonymous tunes: 'As flights of genius they bid defiance to artificial graces and affected cadences'.

Time to build on the likes of Henry Playford's *Collection of Original Scotch Tunes* (1700), Allan Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany* (1724-40) and William Thomson's *Orpheus Caledonius, or A Collection of the Best Scotch Songs set to Musick* (1725), dedicated to the Princess of Wales. Thomson was London-based, moving south after the Act of Union (1707), as did businessman Robert Scott and William Napier, publisher to Johann Samuel Schröter, a German composer and musician in London. Rebecca Scott, Robert's daughter, married Schröter in the teeth of family opposition but was widowed after 13 years. Three years later Haydn arrived. His relationship with

Rebecca is well known. And she probably introduced him to Napier – now broke, wife and 12 children to support – who in 1790 had published his first volume, *A Selection of the Most Favourite Scots Songs*. Haydn offered him 100 settings free, which appeared in June 1792 as *A Selection of Original Scot's Songs in Three Parts, the Harmony by Haydn*. This too had a royal dedication – the Duchess of York, Napier reckoning they were 'worthy of National Patronage'. In all Haydn set 150 songs for Napier, 187 for George Thomson and 65 for William Whyte. Folksong considered 'devoid of art' became art song, 'the coarser poems more or less tidied up' (*Grove*, 1954) by Ramsay. Primitivism expunged.

Start with 'Mary's Dream' in F sharp minor. Haydn set two versions of this poem by Alexander Lowe, one each for Napier and Thomson. Arrangements for Napier were usually for violin and figured bass with no 'symphonies' (ie introductions or postludes). Thomson stipulated symphonies plus a line-up of violin, keyboard and cello. **Susan Hamilton** (Ludi Musici) offers both, singing only two stanzas in Thomson but all four in Napier, adding an introduction too but no postlude. For Flora, however, it's Napier as written but with baryton or viola replacing violin. The story is about Sandy, lost at sea, returning in a dream imploring Mary not to weep for him. By

convention, fishermen couldn't swim. If the ocean claimed them, so be it. Thus Mary laments, but stoically; and in the three recordings, despite small variations in emphasis, Hamilton reaches out to the tragedy, her pronunciation a most affective mixture of English and Gaelic, fatalism conveyed even in the grim third stanza, where Sandy describes the horror before death. Hamilton never forgets that rusticity still lives within the dichotomy inherent in 'relics of ancient national song rendered very acceptable' (Georg August Griesinger). Flora's annotation is careless. There are 16 tracks, not 15; the second of the three charmingly played baryton Divertimentos is No 49, not No 87; and the songs' Hoboken numbers are omitted, which leaves a question mark over the setting of 'Fy gar rub her o'er wi' strae'. Not explained either is why 'O'er Bogie' does not match the Henle edition in words or music. A detailed note though for 'Deutschlands Klage', a dreary work of dubious origin. Geminiani, far from dubious, adapted 11 songs, four for voice backed by combinations of flutes, violins, viola, cello and keyboard, seven transcribed for instruments only. A touch of the Mediterranean enters the mix but there are inflections from violins when 'Scottish' seems to speak, intimations of fiddles resting on arm rather than shoulder.

Intimations of the drawing room impinge in **Werner Gura's** disc. His characterisation – Thomson commissions bar one with no publisher – is intelligent and lucid, enunciation good; but his imagination is not matched by the three partners, particularly Christoph Berner – or to be specific his instrument, billed as a fortepiano but its timbres akin to those of a piano with soft-felted hammers. A lack of bite blunts attack, diluting the dynamism and contrasts within.

So, tradition transmogrified? Or would you agree with Louis Armstrong? 'I guess all music is folk music. I've never heard a horse sing a song.' **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Geminiani. Haydn Scottish Songs
Hamilton; Rare Fruits Council
Ludi Musici © LMO06



Haydn Scottish Songs
Hamilton, Pierlot et al
Flora © FLORA0503



Haydn Scottish Songs
Gura, Berner et al
Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2144

REISSUES

Rob Cowan discusses Rafael Kubelík's Symphony Edition and **James Jolly** dips into Warner's multi-box Karajan-fest

Kubelík's symphonic legacy

The Czech-born conductor's international approach in a hefty box



First among equals in Mahler, if not in Dvořák: centenary conductor Rafael Kubelík

How many musicians would come clean about having to record music for completeness's sake rather than for the sake of its intrinsic artistic value? Some, maybe, but I wouldn't have thought that many. I make the point because when the time came for **Rafael Kubelík** (born 100 years ago) to complete his Berlin cycle of Dvořák symphonies with the First, he appended a note to the original LP set saying that he had only agreed to record it because DG had asked him to. Although containing, to quote Kubelík himself, 'the germ of many stylistic features of his later works', the First is hardly the equal of even the Third, which Kubelík conducts with far more conviction than I remembered. As for the rest, the Fourth is rather heavy-handed (Rowicki for Philips and Neumann for Supraphon are far finer), the Fifth appropriately pastoral though not a patch on Karel Šejna (Supraphon), the Sixth a notch or two up as a performance from the Fifth, the Seventh magnificent in

its spontaneity, the Eighth warm and luxuriant and the Ninth suavely expansive.

The Beethoven cycle is 'very Kubelík' in that it goes global, with each symphony calling on a different national orchestra, highlights being the Berlin Phil *Eroica* (full-bodied and finely detailed), the Israel Phil Fourth (an expressive *Adagio* and a fiery finale) and the Munich – ie Bavarian RSO – *Choral*, where Kubelík realises the work's many daring prophecies, such as the abruptly twitching opening idea, which sounds more unsettling than on virtually any other version. A BRSO Seventh, released after the main set, is, I feel, more compelling than the VPO version included here.

The BPO Schumann cycle is a good deal more sleek (and rather more polished) than its BRSO successor (Sony Classical), but less subtle overall, especially the *Rhenish*, which is very much Kubelík's piece. So far, so good...at least in part, with roughly half of each cycle achieving the desired result. But when it comes to Mahler's 10 (or nine and a half, given that only the *Adagio* of

No 10 is played), Kubelík vies with the best of his rivals, offering us Mahler as pantheist, nature lover, humanist and only reluctant neurotic. Not for Kubelík the aspiring Christian, lapsed Jew, cynic or nihilist, but someone who embraced the world with love and a palpable sense of wonder, whether in the earthy blend of humour and drama in the First, the vast, unpeopled terrains of the Third, the sardonic alarms of the Fifth's opening 'Funeral March' (the *Adagietto* is mercifully fluent), the phased catastrophes of the Sixth's finale or the guarded anger and noble resignation of the Ninth. And yet for me the high point of the entire set is Kubelík's reading of the Seventh, Mahler as open-minded Bohemian, joker, romantic, the two atmospheric 'Nachtmusik' movements quietly playful, the *Scherzo* a slithery reptile, the ragbag finale unexpectedly conclusive. In the Seventh Kubelík lets Mahler have his say without the encumbrance of overheated emotion: this portrait of the artist off the leash is what we need to counter both excessively 'beautified' Mahler and the 'me, me, me' approach, which is just as unrepresentative. Or at least that's how I feel when Kubelík is on the podium. (Gielen, Haitink and Rosbaud have a similar effect.)

Kubelík's useful preference for antiphonally divided violin desks is in evidence in most works programmed, the exceptions being – unless my ears deceive me – Schumann's symphonies and Dvořák's Eighth, all five among the earliest recordings in the set. Patrick Lambert provides a concise and informative booklet-note and my only regret is one of omission: the four Brahms symphonies that Kubelík recorded with the Vienna Philharmonic for Decca (in stereo) in the 1950s, and that could, I'm sure, have brought 23 CDs up to a neat 25. Still, it's a grand tribute, hopefully to be followed by the remainder of Kubelík's DG legacy, similarly repackaged.



THE RECORDING

Rafael Kubelík The Symphony Edition
DG © (23 discs) 479 2689GB23



Brimming with vitality: Herbert von Karajan and the Philharmonia Orchestra

Das Wunder Karajan

Herbert von Karajan's EMI recordings, handsomely boxed by Warner

Herbert von Karajan, the 25th anniversary of whose death fell on July 16, remains a divisive figure – as much for non-musical reasons as for his interpretative approach. Yet many of the most virulent Karajan-haters will often concede that some of the recordings made in the 1950s, usually with the Philharmonia, really aren't bad at all (and the opera sets rather more than that too). Warner Classics, the new owner of the EMI catalogue, is systematically reissuing its entire Karajan catalogue for the anniversary. While much of this material is out of copyright, and therefore available on many other labels, Warner has remastered the recordings for its 13-box reissue series from the original mastertapes, and I must say a splendid job has been done. Many of the sets have been thematically compiled; some seem slightly catch-all. I've been sampling the first eight, all rather funereally packaged in Warner's default black. A generic note is provided by Karajan's biographer and

Gramophone reviewer Richard Osborne, with accompanying notes specific to each box. Contents and recording information are printed on each cardboard sleeve.

The 1950s was the decade in which Karajan developed his recording aesthetic, an approach quite different from the Karajan of the concert hall (something many of his detractors fail to grasp, rarely having heard him live). He learnt how to fix the sound appropriate for each work, what to do in what order to maximise the resources of his ensemble, and above all how to create a real and vivid sense of atmosphere in the studio.

When Walter Legge approached Karajan after the war to record for EMI, the first fruits of their collaboration were made with the **Wiener Philharmoniker**. A 10-disc set focuses on these VPO recordings made between 1946 and 1949, and mixes shorter works with some heartier fare (a crepuscular Brahms Second Symphony, Schubert's *Great C* major, Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* and Beethoven's Fifth, Eighth

and Ninth symphonies). The sound, he warned, shows its age – obviously in mono and a little restricted – but there's no obscuring what must have made people sit up and take note. Karajan has something fresh to say about these key works: there's dynamism, architecture and above all excitement. Whatever you think of the Karajan of the 1970s and beyond, this is remarkable music-making. One highlight has to be Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*, recorded just two years after its premiere and a Karajan speciality: already the sinews and fabric of this complex score are utterly under his hands – he weaves them together in a way that reveals not only the detail but also, unostentatiously, the overall shape, something he did so well. Turning to the other Strausses, a disc of waltzes simply oozes charm. A fabulous bonus comes on a miscellany of opera arias that captures some of the singers active in post-war Vienna including a trio (but not *the* Trio!) of excerpts from *Der Rosenkavalier* (Konetzki, Schwarzkopf and Seefried), *Salome* extracts with Ljuba Welitsch on scorching form, and various Wagner bleeding chunks. All thrilling stuff.

A companion volume, **Choral Music 1947-58**, brings together a 1952-53 Philharmonia Bach B minor Mass (poised and moving but very much of its time in approach), a very fine 1947 VPO Brahms *German Requiem* and a Beethoven *Missa solemnis* from 1958 with the Philharmonia, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf common to all three and lending a lovely glow to the solo group. She also gives us a live 1956 Strauss *Four Last Songs* – fresh and vibrant (though Karajan places 'September' last, to end the work with Dennis Brain's horn solo – I remain to be convinced on both textual and musical grounds), and excerpts from *Fidelio* and a dramatic *Ab! perfido*.

Two boxes are devoted to **Karajan and his Soloists**. The first, covering 1949-58, is the more rewarding because it contains some great music-making. Lipatti's Schumann Concerto is a classic, and there's also a Mozart K467 from Lucerne – both treasurable. The Mozart discs with principals of the Philharmonia – Dennis Brain in the horn concertos, Bernard Walton in the Clarinet Concerto and four of them in the K297a *Sinfonia concertante* – are models of style and lyricism (K297a pops up in the other set, suaver but slightly 'chrome-plated'). The French-born German pianist Walter Gieseking recorded frequently with Karajan and you can hear them in seven different *concertante* works. The Mozart (K467 and 488) are beautiful, classical, direct and wonderfully poetic, and the same goes for the two Beethovens



BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER RECORDINGS
The label of the Berliner Philharmoniker

Inaugural release

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SIR SIMON RATTLE**

ROBERT SCHUMANN
SYMPHONIES 1-4

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The Berliner Philharmoniker launch a new in-house label, Berliner Philharmoniker Recordings, to release selected future concert programmes, marking the first time the orchestra will be responsible for the technical and editorial presentation of its own recordings. The first recording on the new label is one of the Berliner Philharmoniker's most important musical projects in recent years: Robert Schumann's complete symphonies conducted by chief conductor Sir Simon Rattle. In addition to a double CD, the lavishly designed edition also includes high-resolution video and audio on Blu-ray Disc. The recording is available exclusively from the online shop of the Berliner Philharmoniker and from selected retailers.



www.berliner-philharmoniker-recordings.com

(Nos 4 and 5). The Schumann/Grieg work less well but the Franck *Symphonic Variations* are a delight, with pianist and conductor in total sympathy, tracing the twists and turns of this now-too-seldom-heard piece like swallows in flight. The Brahms Second Piano Concerto (why did Karajan never conduct No 1?) is a strangely strait-laced affair, Hans Richter-Haaser's approach very much controlled by the conductor (Karajan's later DG version with Géza Anda is similarly unconventional but in a more classical way). The novelty here is the concertos by Kurt Leimer played by the composer; like the Ravel there's a left-hand and a two-hand concerto, and both are couched in a late-Romantic language that is also tinged with jazz.

The second set of **Karajan and his Soloists** features a large number of collaborations with the pianist Alexis Weissenberg (all the Beethovens, Tchaikovsky No 1, Rachmaninov No 2, Franck *Symphonic Variations*), performances that seem to have all personality drained from the music. I find them utterly unmemorable and without any flavour. The Brahms Violin Concerto with Gidon Kremer finds two temperamental opposites finding little common ground, though the Vivaldi *Four Seasons* with Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Vienna Philharmonic has a strange allure, big-band though it may be. And the same goes for the trumpet concertos with Maurice André – rhythmically very crisp and with some stunning playing by André. The Strauss *Don Quixote* with Rostropovich is very good – it's a work Karajan clearly adored and had much to say about, finding a vein of sadness that's very touching. And the famous all-Russian Beethoven Triple (Oistrakh, Rostropovich and Richter) is a classic. I also enjoyed many of the Mozart wind concertos with members of the Berlin Phil – Karl Leister (Clarinet), Lothar Koch (Oboe), James Galway and Fritz Helmig (Flute and Harp), Andreas Blau (Flute No 2) and Günther Piesk (Bassoon): the wind section has always been this orchestra's crowning glory and all these players have real personality.

Russian Music 1949-60 shows off Karajan's skill as a colourist in music that ranges from Balakirev's First Symphony (very different from Beecham's, though equally valid as an approach), via Mussorgsky (*Pictures*) and Borodin (*Polovtsian Dances* – twice) to Tchaikovsky (Symphonies Nos 4-6 and the *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty* suites). The Peter Ustinov *Peter and the Wolf* is always worth hearing again. Tchaikovsky's last three numbered symphonies were always close to Karajan's heart and he was a fine exponent, finding an ideal balance between

the heart-on-sleeve and the coolly literal, and his ability to make the music dance lifts many movements off the page with terrific élan. (There are two versions of No 4 – a Philharmonia performance from 1953 and a Berlin one from 1960, obviously in superior sound, but both enshrine some very involving playing.)

The 'meatiest' set covers the years **1951-60**, a 12-disc offering that straddles the years when Karajan was moving the focus of his recordings from the Philharmonia to the Berlin Philharmonic. It was a golden period and gave us some real gems. Perhaps strangely in a set that contains symphonies by Mozart, Brahms, Schubert, Schumann and Bruckner, it's a disc of lighter fare that leaps out – a collection recorded in 1955 of music by the Strauss family and Suppé. Here's Karajan at his finest in music he understood innately and gauged to perfection. And what's more, the Philharmonia sound almost more Viennese than the Viennese – phrasing is elegant, rhythms are exquisitely sprung and the

'The Philharmonia sound more Viennese than the Viennese'

whole mood is one of pure charm. Turn to the other Strauss, Richard, and the same spirit informs *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Juan*, while *Tod und Verklärung* reveals the virtuoso side of conductor and orchestra. The three Brahms symphonies here (Nos 1, 2 and 4) are finely crafted and set the style for Karajan's later performances (his Beethoven may be celebrated but Karajan was a wonderful Brahmsian). Woven throughout the set are Mozart symphonies (Nos 29, 35, 38 and 39); while Karajan's way with Mozart (as was the custom in the middle years of the 20th century) sounds a little large-scale, it's beautifully conceived and executed. The set also contains Karajan's first Bruckner recording, the Eighth (a work he recorded twice more, both memorably). It's a rugged, imposing performance – slower than its successors – that makes a huge impression, and while I would always go to the late VPO recording for its sense of a journey almost run, I'm really glad to have heard this fine performance again. Other gems include Hindemith's Symphony *Mathis der Maler* and a collection of Wagner preludes and overtures.

Such a classic of the catalogue is Karajan's 1962 DG **Beethoven** cycle – the first time the nine were recorded as a cycle – that it's often forgotten that between 1951 and 1955 he recorded the nine with

the Philharmonia (incidentally it's also worth pointing out that the late 1970s DG set is probably more consistent than the 1962, with an infinitely superior *Pastoral* – but the 1962 has taken on a particularly iconic status). It's an exciting series and, for this latest presentation, is crowned by a stereo Ninth (the mono version is also offered here). As Michael Kennedy put it when reviewing this set back in January 1990: 'They are still magnificent – brimming with youthful vitality but full, too, of those characteristic shafts of light turned on to Beethoven's scoring, as for example in the joyful account of the *Pastoral* Symphony in which the finale, taken slower than in the first Berlin cycle of 1962, achieves an extraordinary spirituality.' It's good to hear the *Choral* in its newly released stereo version; Karajan's ear for internal balance is even more impressive when the full sound-picture can be experienced.

Karajan was a great champion of the symphonies of **Sibelius** and these sets contain his Philharmonia recordings (Nos 2, 4, 5 – twice – 6 and 7), and his Berlin PO ones (it omits Nos 3 – which, like Beecham and Koussevitzky, he never recorded – and 7), which have a box of their own. Karajan's approach to Sibelius was large-scale, as if hewn from a massive piece of granite (his Berlin No 1 is colossal). Sibelius himself admired Karajan's Philharmonia recording of the Fifth. But the symphony Karajan was most drawn to was the Fourth. Of the two Fourths here (his first and third versions), the Berlin recording is very fine, and as it opens, with deep strings, seems to wrap itself around you in a mood of real desolation, slightly slower than its DG predecessor but beautifully controlled. If pressed I'd probably opt for the two-CD set from DG of Nos 4-7 but these performances are never less than impressive, and the sound very fine. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Wiener Philharmoniker 1946-49

Warner Classics Ⓢ 10 2564 63361-8

Choral Music 1947-58

Warner Classics Ⓢ 5 2564 63362-9

Karajan and his Soloists I

Warner Classics Ⓢ 8 2564 63362-5

Karajan and his Soloists II

Warner Classics Ⓢ 10 2564 63362-4

Russian Music 1949-60

Warner Classics Ⓢ 7 2564 63362-0

BPO, Philharmonia 1951-60

Warner Classics Ⓢ 12 2564 63362-3

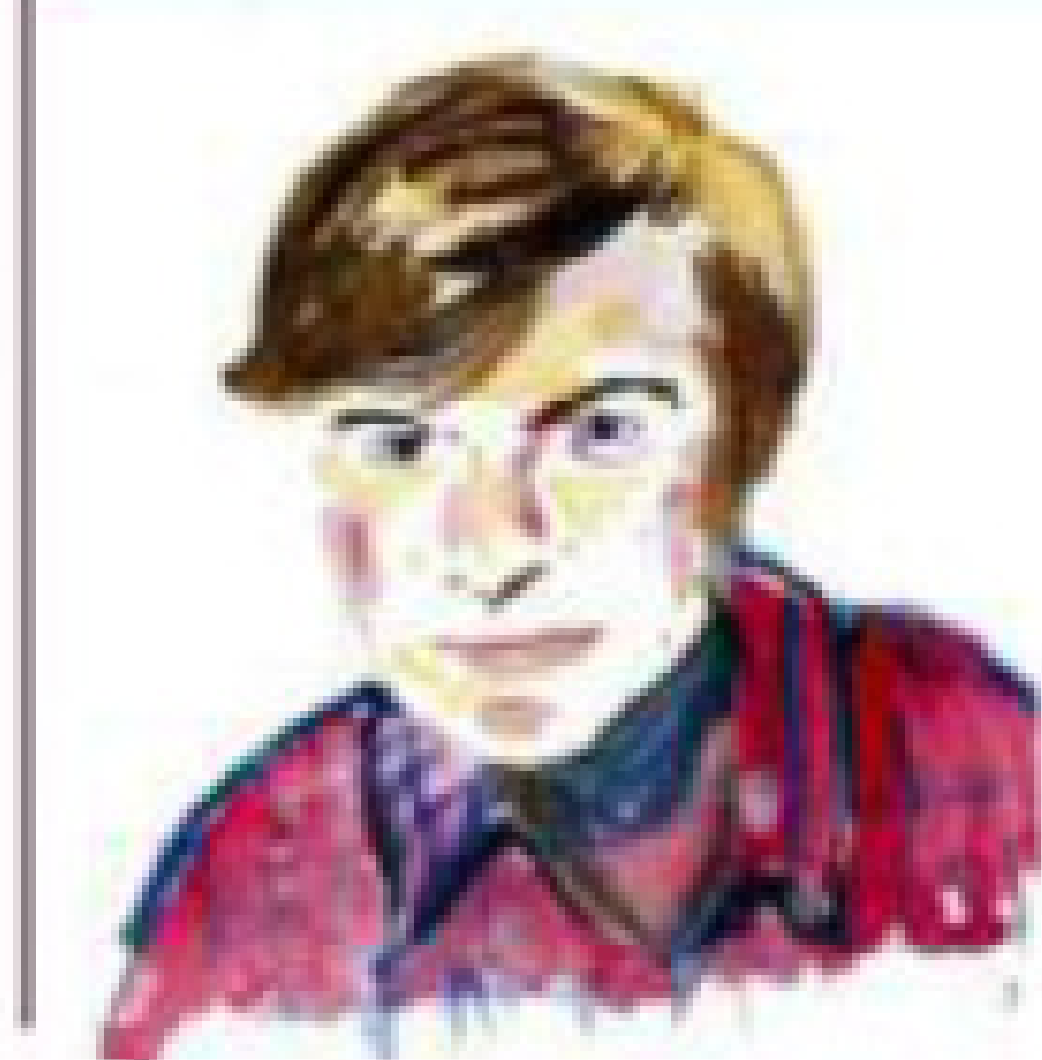
Beethoven Symphonies (r1951-55)

Warner Classics Ⓢ 6 2564 63373-5

Sibelius Symphonies. Orch Wks (r1978-81)

Warner Classics Ⓢ 4 2564 63361-9

Opera



Richard Fairman on Puccini's American opera from Frankfurt:

'Westbroek is womanly and romantic, feisty and independent, a fully rounded portrayal'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



Richard Lawrence reviews a Rossini rarity from Garsington:

'The music throughout is excellent and has been well caught, live, in the company's first venture into recording' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

Birtwistle

Gawain

John Tomlinson *bass-bar* Green Knight/Bertilak

François Le Roux *bar* Gawain

Marie Angel *sop* Morgan Le Fay

Anne Howells *mez* Lady de Hautdesert

Richard Greager *ten* Arthur

Penelope Walmsley-Clark *sop* Guinevere

Omar Ebrahim *bar* Fool

Alan Ewing *bass* Agravain

John Marsden *ten* Ywain

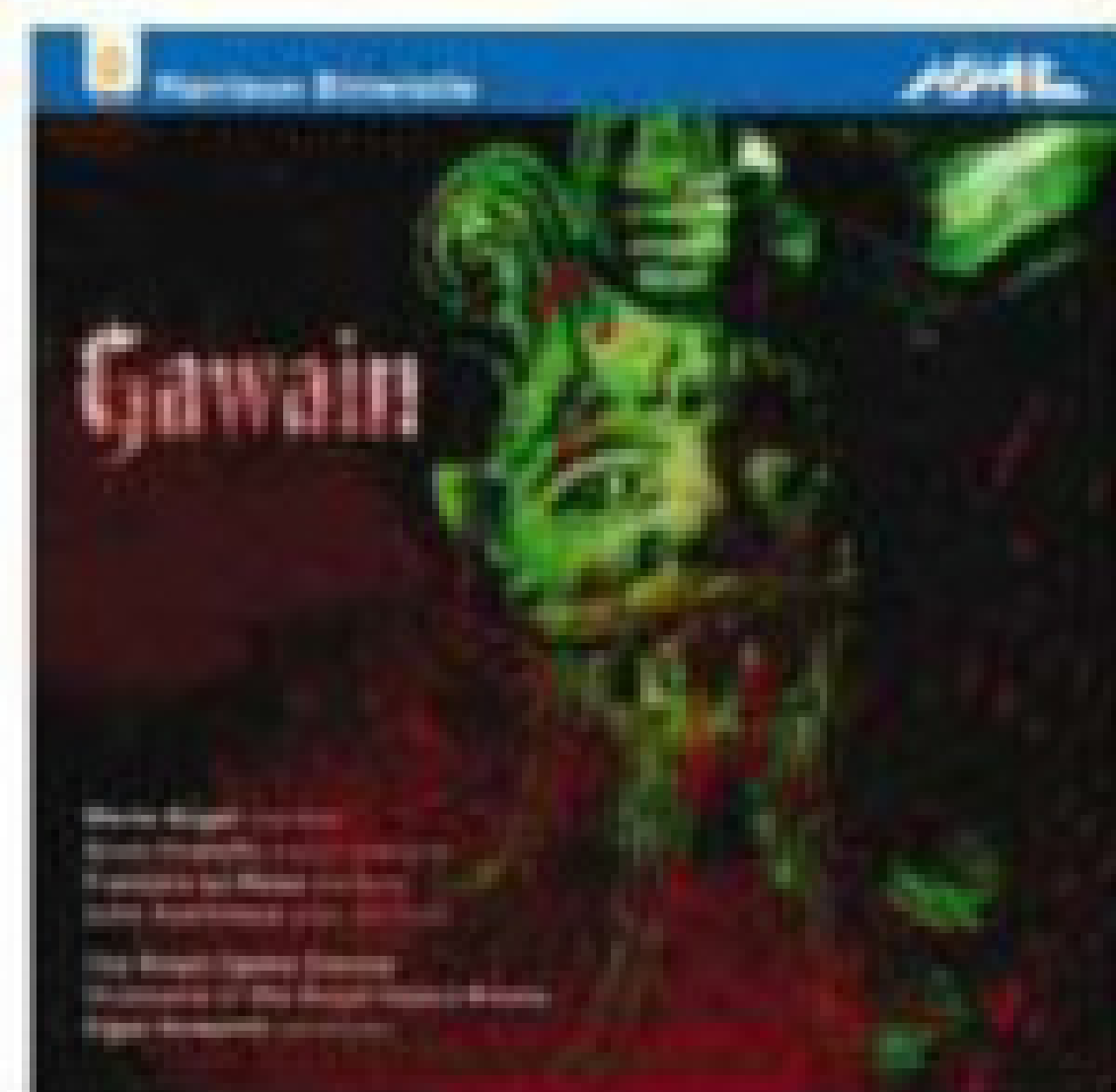
Kevin Smith *counterten* Baldwin

Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden / Elgar Howarth

NMC © ② NMC200 (136' • DDD • S/T)

Recorded live, April 20, 1994

From Collins Classics 7041-2 (5/96)



Birtwistle has always been fascinated by drama and the theatre, which began to

manifest itself in compositions for the concert platform even before he wrote anything for the lyric stage. Myth and ritual have been continuing preoccupations too. When *Gawain*, the fifth of his music-theatre pieces, was first performed at Covent Garden in 1991, it was the first to be described as an 'opera', as if in recognition of the houses for which it was designed and of the expectations of people who go there to listen to stories told through singing. The linear nature of *Gawain* does indeed fulfil the traditional story-telling function of opera, dramatising and illustrating a sequence of events as narrated and elaborated by David Harsent in a libretto based on the Middle English epic of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

At King Arthur's court at Camelot, it is Christmas. Invisible to the court are Morgan Le Fay, the King's half-sister and aunt of Gawain, plotting to destroy the court and to keep Gawain in her thrall, while the course of events is commented upon by her partner in seduction, the Lady de Hautdesert. Arthur demands diversion; they reassure him he is not going to be

disappointed. After a masterly build-up of tension characteristic of the composer, the Green Knight enters on horseback and issues a challenge: he is willing to receive a blow from any of the grail knights on condition that a year and a day from now whoever has agreed to the wager will accept the same from him. Gawain responds, decapitating the Green Knight with one blow, who then picks up his head and rides off, while continuing to sing through it with a reminder of the bargain he has struck. I've long cherished this theatrical moment, along with the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father and the statue of the Commendatore. My acknowledgments by the way, in the Birtwistle, to Andrew Clements's synopsis in the NMC booklet as well as his excellent note.

This recording derives from a BBC broadcast in April 1994. It is, of course, a welcome addition to NMC's representation of Birtwistle's stage pieces. But take note: it comes from a revision of the original 1991 production in which substantial cuts to the score were made, principally in the cyclical masque-like Turning of the Seasons section which closes Act 1. At the balancing point of the opera at the beginning of Act 2, when Gawain embarks on his journey to the Green Chapel, after a year and a day have elapsed, to confront his fate, more music is lost from the only extended section for orchestra alone. The losses amount to about 30 minutes in all and are particularly damaging to the masque of the turning seasons – the climax of Act 1 and a magnificent inspiration. Yet *Gawain* is already a long evening. In an exceptional recent performance at the Barbican by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Martyn Brabbins they were restored; you will have been able to make up your mind about them if you caught the broadcast on July 15.

On NMC, John Tomlinson as the Green Knight has peerless authority and you can hear his every word. He was undiminished in quality at the Barbican performance I attended, though by then the rest of the

cast had changed. François Le Roux here, after a slow start, fleshes out the character of Gawain in Act 2 and becomes a worthy adversary, returning to Camelot at the close after another journey, this time of self-discovery. Marie Angel and Anne Howells as the two schemers, usually hunting as a pair, make only a generalised effect and you will need the libretto to help you register what they're singing about. Ideally, of course, we need a DVD – perhaps one from last year's Salzburg production? – to get words, music and stage picture together and the experience of *Gawain* at full force. The effect overall of this performance, in audio alone, is claggy and, I suggest, too little differentiated. **Stephen Plaistow**

Donizetti



Maria Stuarda

Joyce DiDonato *mez* Maria Stuarda

Elza van den Heever *sop* Elisabetta

Matthew Polenzani *ten* Roberto

Matthew Rose *bass* Giorgio Talbot

Joshua Hopkins *bar* Lord Guglielmo Cecil

Maria Zifchak *mez* Anna Kennedy

Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra / Maurizio Benini

Stage director **David McVicar**

Video director **Gary Halvorson**

Erato © **DVD** 2564 63203-5 (142' • NTSC • 16:9 •

DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)



This is one of the Met's 'Live in HD' performances relayed to cinemas last year. It comes complete

with the brief introduction to each act by Deborah Voigt; the interviews are consigned to the bonus feature. The director, appropriately enough, is Sir David McVicar and the designer is another Scot, John Macfarlane, whose period costumes and simple sets are both imaginative and respectful. Just the one set, essentially: four steps lead up to a platform from which, at the end, more steps ascend to the scaffold. The background changes appropriately:

trees for the fateful – and fictional – meeting of the queens; a wall covered in graffiti for Mary's cell.

Though the mood of the opera is sombre, there's a lightness of touch to the beginning. A cheerful chorus welcomes Elizabeth, who enters dressed in white: her hand is being sought by the Duke of Anjou, and she muses on love and liberty. Prompted by Cecil to order Mary's execution, she shows her haughty side; in the scene with Leicester, she is tender as well as imperious. In the Second Act we see her old, rouged, with a new auburn wig. Elza van den Heever is quite brilliant as she moves from skittish to jealous, contemptuous and baleful.

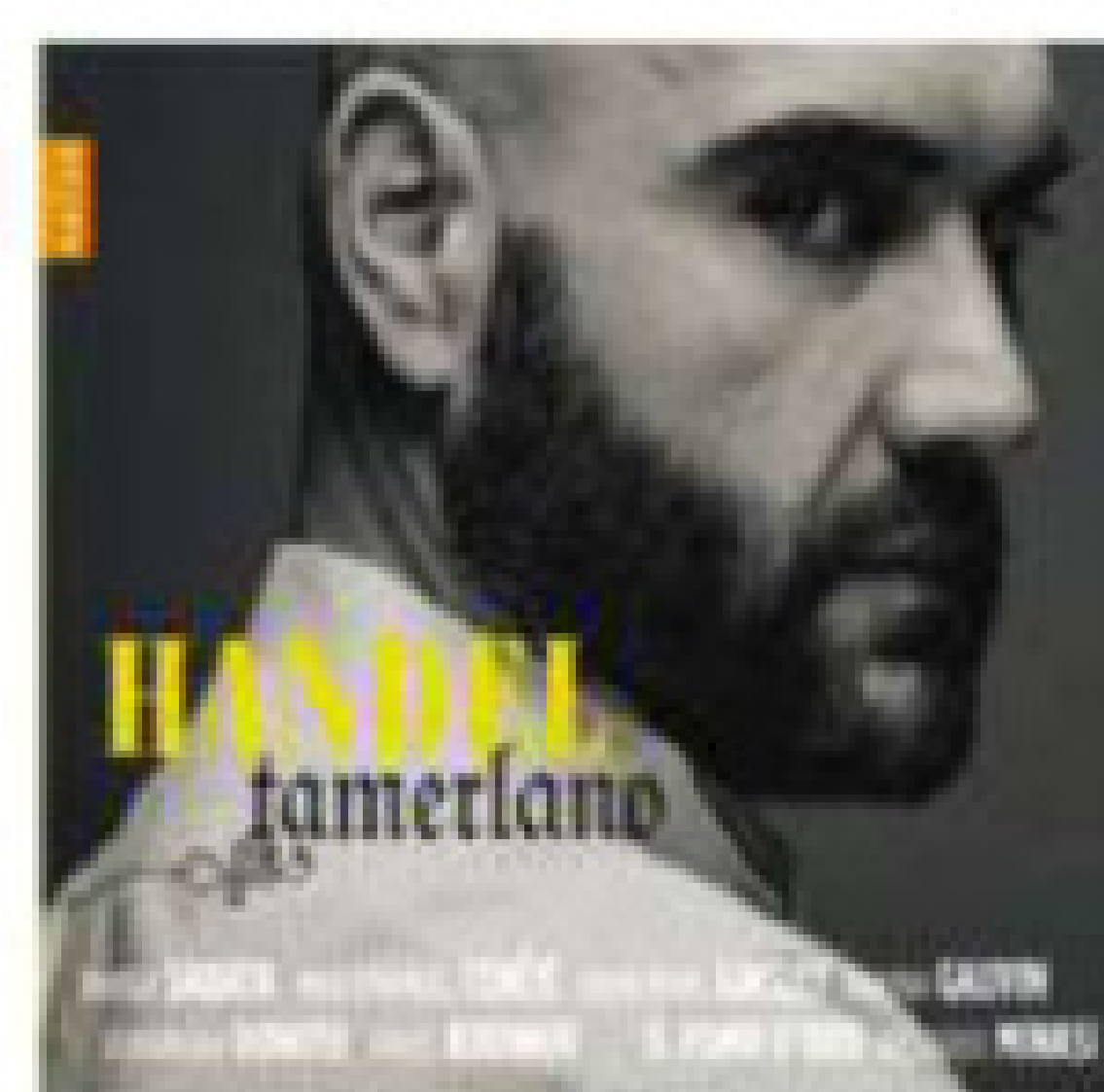
The three men are all good. Joshua Hopkins (anti-Mary) is implacable, Matthew Rose (pro-Mary) dignified and compassionate. Matthew Polenzani is Leicester. His phrasing may lack the elegance of Bergonzi or Kraus but he cuts a believable figure as a passionate man with divided loyalties, and his singing is always pleasing. As Mary, Joyce DiDonato is an absolute knock-out. She makes a tender impression with her cavatina, the regretful *cantabile* followed by perfectly placed coloratura in the cabaletta. She holds herself back in the 'false canon' that opens the confrontation before, goaded beyond endurance, she lets rip. In prison, shaking uncontrollably, she has a moving confessional scene with Talbot; at the scaffold, her *preghiera* (prayer) builds up to a mighty climax before she forgives Elizabeth and bids farewell to Leicester. In all this, DiDonato is spellbinding through a perfect combination of singing and acting. Maurizio Benini conducts impeccably. This production should be seen by anyone who thinks that *bel canto* opera is nothing but sopranos and tenors standing around, warbling scales.

Richard Lawrence

Handel

Tamerlano

Xavier Sabata *countertenor*.....Tamerlano
John Mark Ainsley *tenor*.....Bajazet
Karina Gauvin *sop*.....Asteria
Max Emanuel Cencic *countertenor*.....Andronico
Ruxandra Donose *mez*.....Irene
Pavel Kudinov *bass*.....Leone
Il Pomo d'Oro / Riccardo Minasi
Naïve ③ V5373 (3h 13' • DDD)



What a wonderful opera this is. *Tamerlano* comes between *Giulio Cesare*

and *Rodelinda*: not nearly as well known as either, it's fully their equal. It opened at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket on October 31, 1724; when it was revived in November 1731 Handel omitted the trio in Act 2 and added an aria for Leone. This recording follows the latter version but reinstates the trio. Crucially, it also adopts the cuts in the *secco* recitative that Handel made in 1731; it remains a long opera, with the *secco* recitative accounting for about a quarter of the whole. It is also a dark opera. The proud Ottoman sultan Bajazet shows nothing but contempt for his captor, Tamerlano (Timur, alias Marlowe's Tamburlaine). After Bajazet's death – offstage, but only just – there's the bleakest 'happy ending' chorus imaginable, in which the heroine doesn't join. The dramatic situation is striking – which is the hero, which the villain? – and the music superb.

The chief characteristic of this performance is the unbridled energy of the orchestra. Time and again, in fast music, the violins speed towards the end of a phrase like a bull charging a gate; further impetus comes from swelling on tied notes. Tamerlano's first aria is marked by heavy accents, while the strings surge and stab away in Bajazet's exciting 'Ciel e terra'. It is immensely invigorating, but there are calmer episodes too: soft clarinets for Irene's *siciliano* and gentle recorders for 'Vivo in te', a duet in the vein of 'Io t'abbraccio' in the following year's *Rodelinda*.

John Mark Ainsley makes a heroic Bajazet, deeply moving in the broken phrases of his death scene; Andronico is tenderly sung by Max Emanuel Cencic; and Ruxandra Donose brings lovely warm tone to Irene. Why does she speak over the music in her arietta? Karina Gauvin is splendidly forthright as Asteria: no shrinking violet, she makes the singers for Trevor Pinnock and George Petrou sound bland in comparison. I find Xavier Sabata slightly too hooty for comfort but he too is well inside his part.

Petrou's account of the 1724 version, recitatives and all, is still to be prized. There are good things in Pinnock's live recording (1731, roughly, minus four arias). But newcomers should start with this throat-grabbing performance from Riccardo Minasi and Il Pomo d'Oro.

Richard Lawrence

Selected comparisons:

English Concert, Pinnock (7/02) (AVIE) AV0001

Orch of Patras, Petrou (2/08) (MDG) MDG609 1457-2

Handel

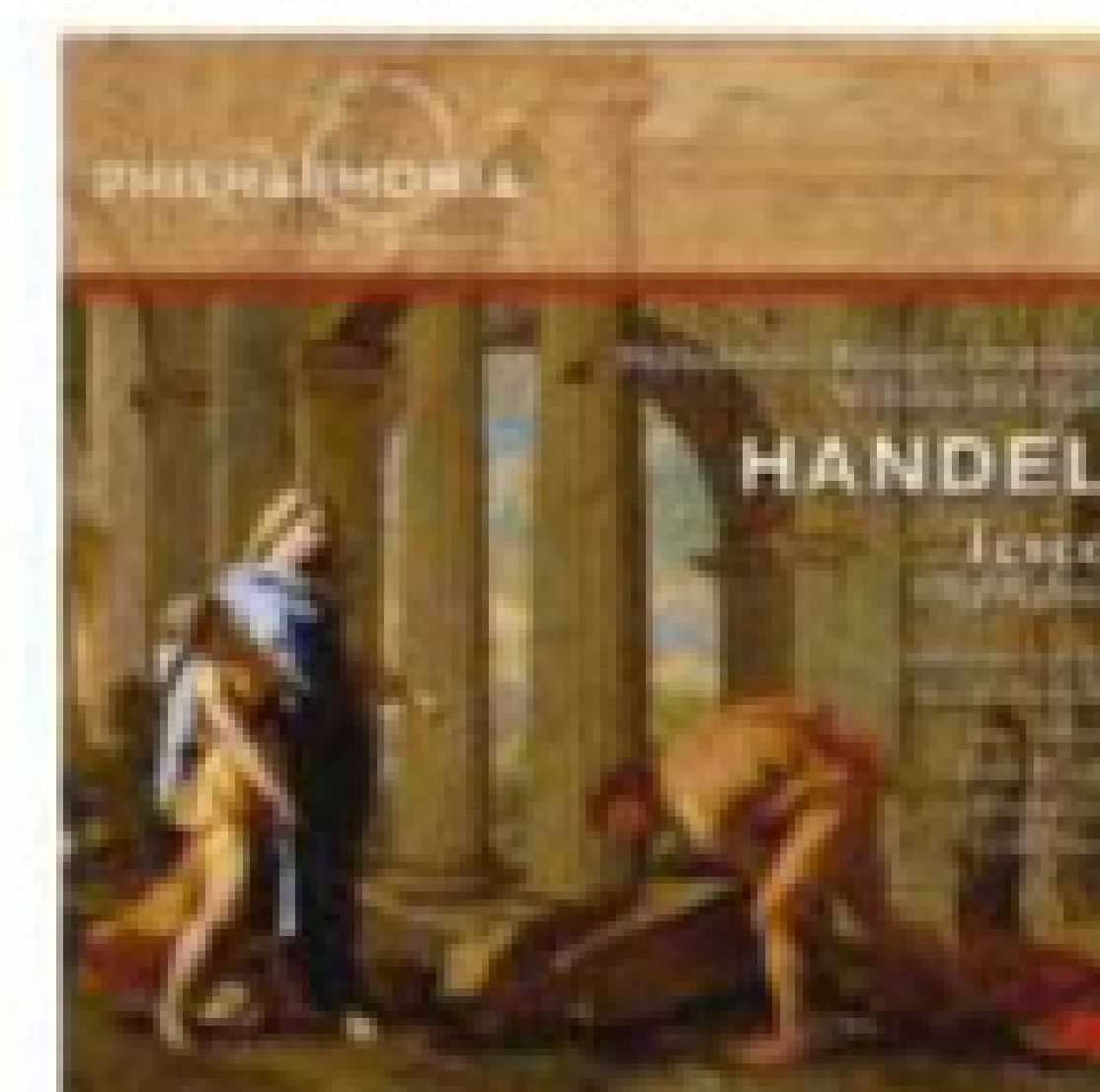
Teseo (highlights)

Amanda Forsythe *sop*.....Teseo

Amy Freston *sop*.....Agilea
Dominique Labelle *sop*.....Medea
Drew Minter *countertenor*.....Egeo
Céline Ricci *sop*.....Clizia
Robin Blaze *countertenor*.....Arcane
Jeffrey Fields *bar*.....Sacerdote di Minerva
Jonathan Smucker *ten*.....Chorus
Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra /
Nicholas McGegan

Philharmonia Baroque ⑤ PBP07 (78' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at First Congregational Church,
Berkeley, CA, April 13-14, 2013



In 2011 the Göttingen Handel Festival bid an emotional farewell to its long-serving

Artistic Director Nicholas McGegan with a production of *Teseo* that was performed with a lively sense of humour, knowing theatrical winks and an undiluted affection for the characters. Last year an almost identical cast reassembled in Berkeley with McGegan's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. The spirited élan evident from McGegan's California concerts makes it a pity that this live document has been reduced to only a selection of highlights. No doubt inevitable disturbances such as traffic noise, audience coughs and a few unfixable bum notes had something to do with why about half the opera is missing, but I lament the omission of Medea's lovelorn 'Dolce riposo'.

There are distracting fade-outs during recitatives but compensation is found in a palpable sense of fun and spontaneity spreading through the orchestra and onwards into the cast, and the selected action brims with personality and charm. McGegan's pacing, his orchestra's subtle playing and Amanda Forsythe's singing ensure that *Teseo*'s 'Chi ritorna alla mia mente' is breathtakingly gorgeous, and so is the dulcet partnership between Robin Blaze and a pair of flutes in Arcane's beguiling 'Le luci del mio bene'. Agilea's spellbinding 'Amarti sì vorrei' displays the chamber-music sensitivity of the continuo team of David Tayler (theorbo), Phoebe Carrai (cello) and Hanneke van Proosdij (harpsichord). Of course, Dominique Labelle's irascible sorceress Medea steals the show, whether cackling wickedly like a pantomime witch in her turbulent 'Sibillando, ululando' or the devastating seriousness in her explosive soliloquy 'Morrò, ma vendicata'. Albeit imperfect and incomplete, this is an enjoyable snapshot of genuine flesh-and-blood theatrical fun. David Vickers

Mozart

'Arias'

Le nozze di Figaro – Dove sono i bei momenti.

Il sogno di Scipione – Lieve sono al par del vento.

Zaide – Ruhe sanft, mein holdes Leben.

Die Zauberflöte – Ach ich fühl's; Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen. Ah, lo previdi, K272. Ah se in ciel, benigne stelle, K538. Voi avete un cor fedele, K217. Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio, K418

Emma Matthews *sop*

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra / Marko Letonja

ABC Classics © ABC481 0776 (60' • DDD)



Emma Matthews is a soprano who has appeared in an impressive range

of operas in her native Australia. Her repertoire includes Berg (Lulu), Strauss (Sophie and Zdenka), Verdi (Gilda and Violetta), Donizetti (Lucia and Marie) and Bellini (Giulietta and Amina); she made her Covent Garden debut as Janáček's Vixen, conducted by Mackerras. As for Mozart, she has sung Ilia, both Konstanze and Blonde, Cherubino, Servilia and Pamina. Only this last role is represented here: a touching 'Ach ich fühl's' rather let down by a matter-of-fact orchestral postlude.

She has not yet sung the Countess or the Queen of the Night onstage; as it happens, the latter's second aria is the least successful number, the arpeggios a little wild (and the first word sounds awfully like 'Die' rather than 'Der'). The rest of this unhackneyed recital is delightful. Matthews sets out her stall with a busy, generalised aria from the 15-year-old composer's *Il sogno di Scipione*, the coloratura absolutely spot-on both in rhythm and in pitch. The peaceful 'Ruhe sanft' from *Zaide* is a canny choice for a contrast of mood. 'Vorrei spiegarvi', written for Aloysia Lange, Mozart's sister-in-law (and lost love), shows off Matthews's clear, bell-like tone. The duetting with David Nuttall's oboe is lovely, but just dig Mozart's chromatic inflections for the bassoon!

Matthews captures the varying emotions of 'Ah, lo previdi', a 12-minute scena; and there's more excellent coloratura in 'Ah se in ciel', another aria for Aloysia, and in 'Voi avete un cor fedele'. Decent support from conductor and orchestra. There are four pictures of the singer; none of the composer. **Richard Lawrence**

Puccini

La fanciulla del West

Eva-Maria Westbroek *sop*..... **Minnie**

Carlo Ventre *ten*..... **Dick Johnson**

Ashley Holland *bar*..... **Jack Rance**

Peter Marsh *ten*..... **Nick**

Alfred Reiter *bass*..... **Ashby**

Simon Bailey *bass*..... **Sonora**

Chorus of Frankfurt Opera; Frankfurt Opera and

Museum Orchestra / Sebastian Weigle

Oehms © ② OC945 (130' • DDD)

Recorded live, May–June 2013



Like many a live performance of *La fanciulla del West*, this one takes

a while before everybody is warmed up – understandable when the leading roles are so taxing. That might seem a reason to prefer a studio recording, but they have always been few and far between. Even Pappano's Puccini cycle for EMI failed to get this far. But do not fear: the cast in Frankfurt's production were keeping their powder dry and by the Act 2 showdown this performance is going at full throttle.

Eva-Maria Westbroek and Carlo Ventre, Minnie and Dick Johnson, throw themselves heart and soul into their roles (how could they not, when Puccini has given them such thrilling music?). In one of her favourite roles, Westbroek is womanly and romantic, feisty and independent, a fully rounded portrayal of Puccini's golden girl, if only her top notes were not so raw. Ventre is also less than ideal vocally, as his tenor passes through patches of hollow, brassy sound, but he is Italian, wholehearted and ardent, a worthy match overall for his Minnie. Ashley Holland makes a thoroughly menacing Jack Rance and Simon Bailey as Sonora, Peter Marsh as Nick and Alfred Reiter as Ashby lead a strong supporting cast down at the Polka saloon. A touch of heaviness, coupled with a fondness for whipping up the pace at climaxes, reveals Sebastian Weigle to be a less than idiomatic Puccini conductor, but the Frankfurt orchestra play well for him and he makes sure the drama is blazing away by the halfway stage.

Does this well-recorded live performance alter existing recommendations? The same production (rather dreary) is already available on DVD from Stockholm with Nina Stemme as a formidable Minnie. Those who admire Westbroek may prefer to see as well as hear her on DVD from Amsterdam in Nikolaus Lehnhoff's controversial production, a parable of the American dream. For 30 years the Royal Opera production, with Carol Neblett as Minnie and Plácido Domingo as Dick Johnson, has set the standard on CD and DVD alike. It still does.

Richard Fairman

Selected comparisons:

Royal Op, Mehta (8/79) (DG) 474 840-2GOR2*

Royal Op, Santi (12/03, 4/10) (WMW)*

DVD 5046 68356-2

Netherlands Op, Rizzi (12/10) (OPAR)

DVD OA1039D; **BD** OABD7075D

Royal Swedish Op, Morandi (11/13) (EURO)

DVD 207 2598; **BD** 207 2594

Puccini



Madama Butterfly

Alexia Voulgaridou *sop*..... **Madama Butterfly**

Teodor Ilincăi *ten*..... **Pinkerton**

Lauri Vasar *bar*..... **Sharpless**

Cristina Damian *mez*..... **Suzuki**

Jürgen Sacher *ten*..... **Goro**

Viktor Rud *bar*..... **Prince Yamadori**

Ida Aldrian *mez*..... **Kate Pinkerton**

Jongmin Park *bass*..... **Bonze**

Thomas Florio *bar*..... **Imperial Commissioner**

Chorus of the Hamburg State Opera; Hamburg

Philharmonic Orchestra / Alexander Joel

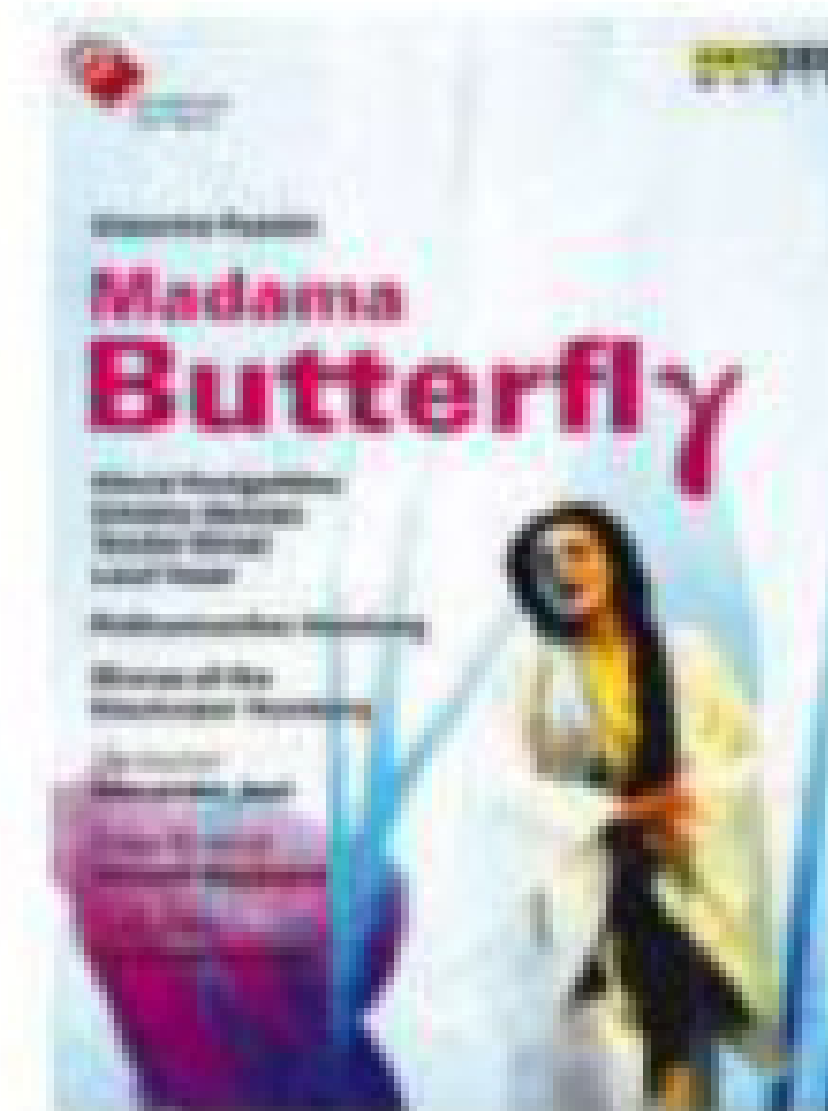
Stage director **Vincent Boussard**

Video director **Myriam Hoyer**

Arthaus Musik © **DVD** 102 187; © **DVD** 108 106

(137' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, November 2012



Musically solid and theatrically intriguing, this *Madama Butterfly* from Hamburg brings one to

ponder whether this opera is truly about love or advantageous circumstance.

Vincent Boussard's stylish production takes the latter road but with a certain amount of subtlety that doesn't violate alternative interpretations. By chance or design, Alexia Voulgaridou (in the title-role) comes off as rather older than Teodor Ilincăi's Pinkerton, suggesting her marriage options are dangerously dwindling and Pinkerton is doing this marriage thing as a drunken lark. In the early scenes, she assumes an affected stance similar to stylised Japanese prints: her head slightly cocked in a way that hides her neck and makes sure her head is lower than his. Ilincăi ingests more liquor than one usually sees for Pinkerton, and though he doesn't lose his composure, their Act 1 seduction feels a bit creepy. When she does submit to him, you feel a bit queasy, in contrast to the Metropolitan Opera's DVD on Sony Classical, in which Marcello Giordani convinces you he has truly fallen in love with Butterfly and won't abandon her heedlessly.

Some eccentricity creeps in along the edges. As Sharpless, Lauri Vasar looks like the youngest person onstage, suggesting that his responsible persona has nothing to do with his age. Costumes have some wild



A production 'as dark as the heart of the opera's Chinese fairy-tale princess': Andrei Serban's *Turandot*, on screen from the Royal Opera House

cards. One expects the marriage broker Goro to have some Western affectation given how he is profiting. But the Bonze, who condemns Butterfly for breaking with Japanese tradition, is in such Western dress that you wonder if he's Pinkerton's commanding officer. Kate Pinkerton resembles a department-store mannequin, perhaps showing how the Japanese might see such a thoroughly American woman, though through that facade Ida Aldrian projects a sense of caring towards Butterfly. Butterfly's child is a doll dressed like Pinkerton (an oft-used idea these days) but is deposited in a closet full of other dolls. Do they represent Butterfly's broken dreams? Is she a serial bride? The central scenic element is a winding stairway in the middle of the stage coming through the floor, allowing expedient entrances and exits but also suggesting a discarded watchtower from Act 2 of *Tristan und Isolde*. But those who don't take to the forced picturesqueness of the Met's Anthony Minghella production will find this red herring to be minor.

The opera feels longer, with less romantic sweep. Indeed, the lingering presence of the bottle from which Pinkerton swigs in Act 1 suggests the marriage is one big mistake. The singing

is mostly excellent, especially Voulgaridou as Butterfly, who is a true *spinto* soprano with a full-bodied lower range that's lacking in Patricia Racette's Butterfly at the Met. Though rich in tone, Ilincai suffers from mildly sagging pitch at times, though his passing resemblance to a young George W Bush adds to the American-ness of his characterisation. No faults lie with conductor Alexander Joel's spirited but moderate direction or with the way the video direction captures the production's subtly evolving colour scheme. So if not the *Butterfly* of one's dreams, the DVD could occupy your thoughts for a good long time.

David Patrick Stearns

Selected comparison:

Met Op, Summers (SONY) 88697 80662-9

Puccini

Turandot

Lise Lindstrom <i>sop</i>	Turandot
Marco Berti <i>ten</i>	Calaf
Eri Nakamura <i>sop</i>	Liù
Dionysios Sourbis <i>bar</i>	Ping
David Butt Philip <i>ten</i>	Pang
Doug Jones <i>ten</i>	Pong
Raymond Aceto <i>bass</i>	Timur
Alasdair Elliott <i>ten</i>	Emperor Altoum
Michel de Souza <i>bar</i>	Mandarin

Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden / Henrik Nánási

Stage director Andrei Serban

Video director Ian Russell

Opus Arte © DVD OA1132D; © OABD7142D

(125' + 12' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live, September 2013

Bonus material includes artist interviews



Long one of my favourite productions of anything, the Andrei Serban *Turandot* arrives on video, some

30 years after I saw its out-of-London try-out at the Olympics Arts Festival in Los Angeles, in a state of near defeat. Serban struck a healthy blow against the ultra-ornate Zeffirellian approach with a look that's often as dark as the heart of the opera's Chinese fairy-tale princess who beheads her suitors. With the chorus lined up along the rear of a primitive-looking multi-tiered set, the stage is effectively cleared for cleaner story-telling, using well-selected Chinese theatre techniques to convey not some fabulous royal court of one's imagination but a provincial society dominated by a sorceress of sorts who

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BBC Radio 3 CD Review



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BBC Music Magazine

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Independent Record Review

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maintains inhumane rule through some strange, unexplained power.

At least that's how it came off with Gwyneth Jones and Plácido Domingo, both accomplished actors as well as singers, who originally played the main roles and gave a special charge to the Act 2 riddle scene. There, Calaf's struggle isn't just answering the riddle but freeing himself from Turandot's psychological stranglehold that keeps him from knowing his own mind.

Of course, any production's meaning morphs according to who is singing and re-directing it. But the most immediate problem in this DVD is the production's depth of field, which seems to have been impossible for video director Ian Russell to capture amid low lighting levels and surprisingly limited camera angles. Often the chorus disappears into stage murk. The prevalence of stage-level shots that look up at the set distractingly reveals a lighting apparatus that takes you out of the opera's world.

There's still plenty to look at, with a strong dance and acrobatic element – the Ping, Pang and Pong trio are unusually physical besides singing extremely well – plus *coup de théâtre* moments that are obligatory even in the most high-minded *Turandot*. But without the visible chorus, there's little sense of Turandot's community. Also, shots veer towards what looks hot, as opposed to how the scene builds.

Though led with great theatrical authority by conductor Henrik Nánási, the cast seems untried. In the leading roles, both Lise Lindstrom and Marco Berti have all the necessary notes and then some. But one doesn't realise how much these roles need a strong theatrical presence until one doesn't have it. Lindstrom is menacing but without many details, and Berti is theatrically inert, seemingly with only a rudimentary sense of how to operate onstage. As Liù, Eri Nakamura is everything they – as well as Raymond Aceto's somewhat blank Timur – are not. The performance makes a far different impression if you close your eyes. Berti, in particular, has a fine sense of style and expression. But since this is a DVD, closing your eyes is not the point.

David Patrick Stearns

Rossini

Le comte Ory

Javier Camarena *ten*.....Comte Ory
Cecilia Bartoli *mez*.....Adèle
Ugo Guagliardo *bass*.....Tutor
Rebeca Olvera *sop*.....Isolier
Oliver Widmer *bass-bar*.....Raimbaud

Liliana Nikiteanu *mez*.....Ragonde
Teresa Sedlmair *sop*.....Alice
Orchestra La Scintilla / Muhai Tang

Stage director Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier

Video director Olivier Simonnet

Decca (F) (2) DVD 074 3467DH; (F) 074 3468DH
(142' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live, 2011



The lovely small Zurich Opernhaus is ideal for Rossini – as it is for Moshe Leiser, Patrice Caurier and their bespoke team of designers who have been working there of late with Cecilia Bartoli and members of the house's own resident ensemble. Last month I welcomed Decca's DVD of their fine 2012 staging of Rossini's *Otello* and now Rossini's delectable late comedy *Le comte Ory*, also stylishly filmed by Olivier Simonnet, follows hard on its heels.

As a staging of *Le comte Ory*, this is the best we have yet had on DVD – superior to Jérôme Savary's extremely louche 1990s Glyndebourne production, Lluís Pasqual's zany Pesaro effort or the 2011 New York Met staging where a stellar cast led by Flórez, Damrau and DiDonato is the principal draw. Leiser and Caurier update the action from 13th-century France to France in the late 1950s. So it's from the Algerian wars rather than the Crusades that the all too susceptible womenfolk await their husbands' return. In Act 2 a portrait of General de Gaulle hangs on the wall of the Countess's comfortably furnished castle apartment; in Act 1 it's from a caravan parked in the village square that Ory plies his trade. Not that any of this seriously affects the *mise en scène* as Rossini and his librettists originally imagined it. On the contrary, by choosing its ground carefully (and mercifully eschewing post-1960s flower-power high jinks), this delightfully imagined production actually enhances the distinctively French feel of Rossini's marvellous score.

Bartoli's vocal registers may not be quite as finely 'matched' as one might hope for in the role of the Countess (written for the French lyric soprano Laure Cinti-Damoreau) but the combination of classy singing and delighted playing quickly has one setting such quibbles aside. The Mexican-born Ory, Javier Camarena, and the Mexican-born Isolier, Rebeca Olvera, are both members of the Zurich company, both on the cusp of larger careers. Olvera is a delight throughout, Camarena a delight once the voice has fully warmed.

It would be idle to suggest that, voice

for voice, this performance matches its Metropolitan Opera rival. It's as a staging that it gives the greater pleasure. It is also extremely well conducted by Muhai Tang. He leads with precision and point, and yet in that most exquisite of operatic nocturnes, the great Act 2 Trio, is capable of drawing sounds of rare beauty from the period instruments of the Orchestra La Scintilla. **Richard Osborne**

Selected comparisons:

NY Met Op, Benini (7/12) (VIRG) DVD 070959-9

Pesaro Op, Carignani (ARTH) DVD 101 649, 108 063

Glyndebourne, A Davis (WARN) DVD 0630 18646-2

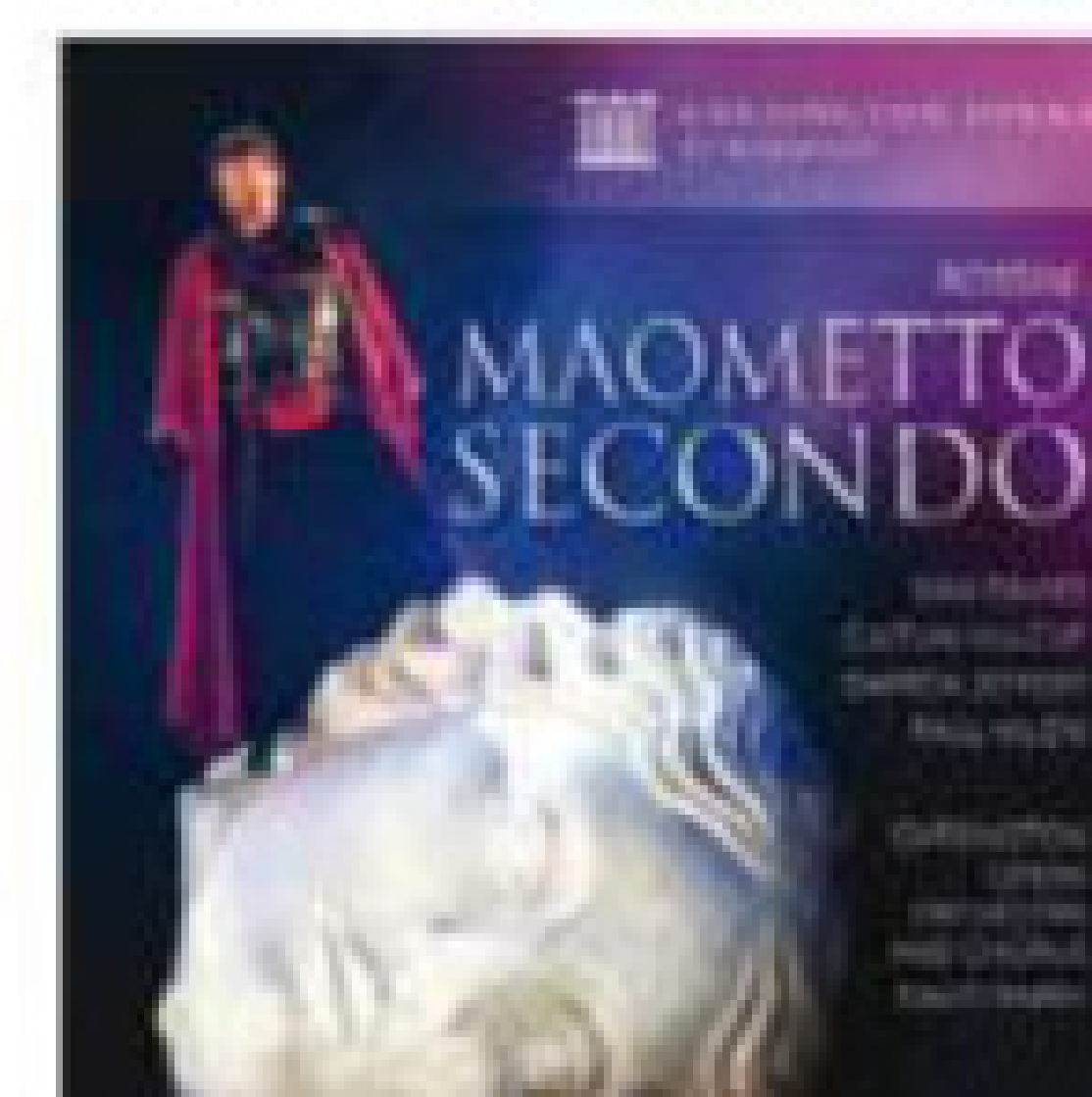
Rossini

Maometto secondo

Paul Nilon *ten*.....Erisso
Siân Davies *sop*.....Anna
Darren Jeffery *bass-bar*.....Maometto
Caitlin Hulcup *mez*.....Calbo
Christopher Diffey *ten*.....Condulmiero
Richard Dowling *ten*.....Selimo
Garsington Opera Chorus and Orchestra / David Parry

Avie (M) (3) AV2312 (168' • DDD • S/T/t)

Recorded live at Garsington Opera, Wormsley, Bucks, June-July 2013



Mehmet II was the Ottoman sultan who captured Byzantine Constantinople in

1453. The portrait attributed to Gentile Bellini, on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum, shows the man in pensive mood: bearded, turbaned, modestly dressed. There's no sign of his ambition, his power or his cruelty. This is the Mehmet of Rossini's opera, where he is a warrior, certainly, but also a lover.

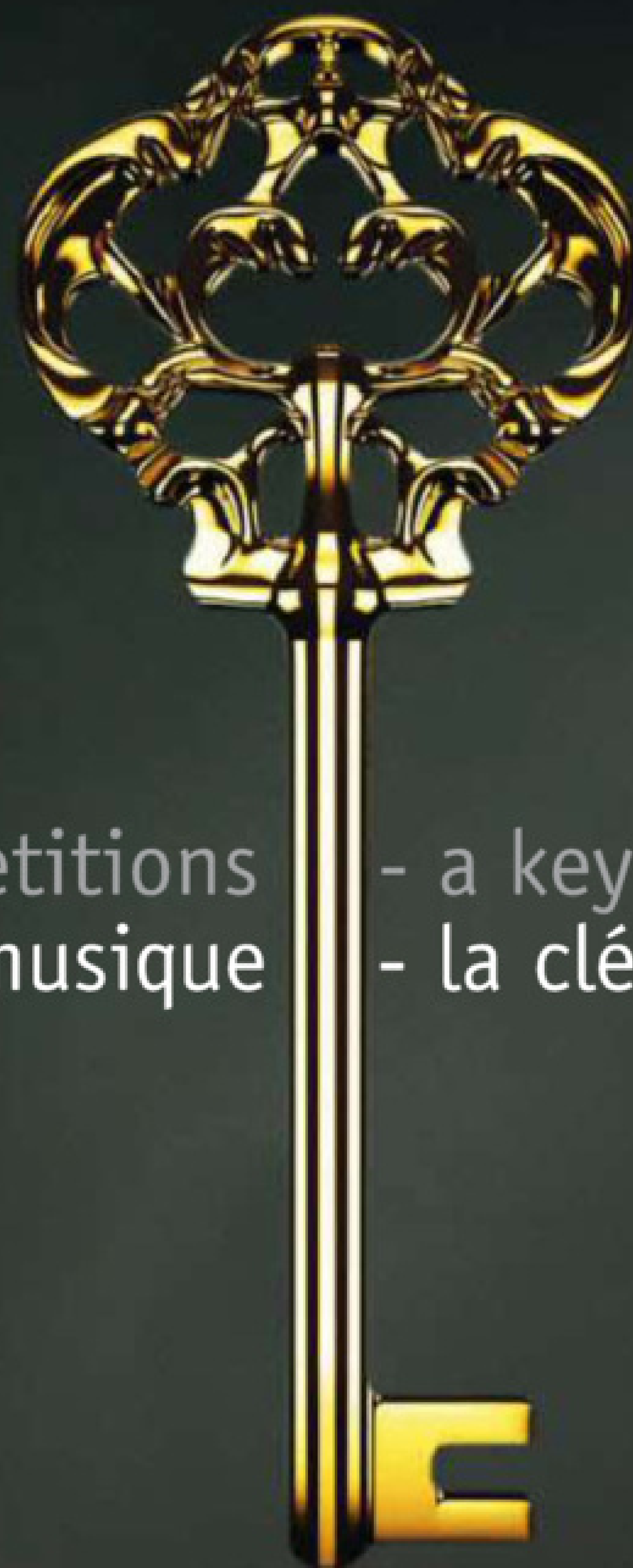
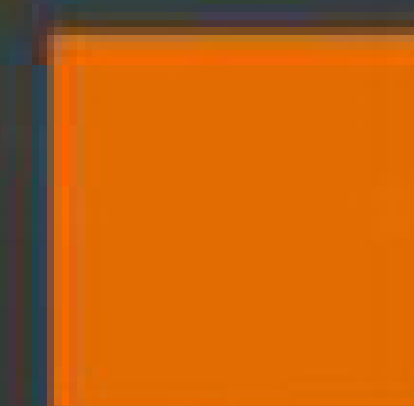
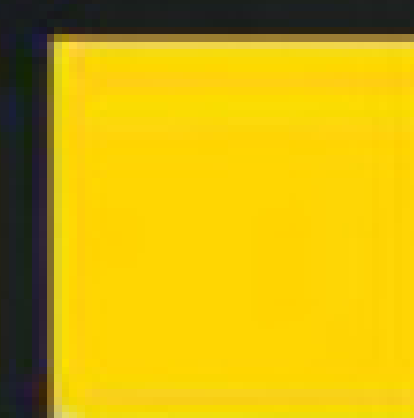
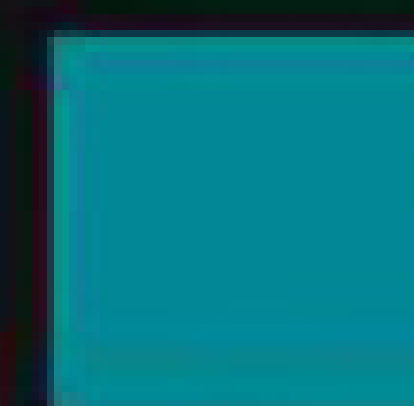
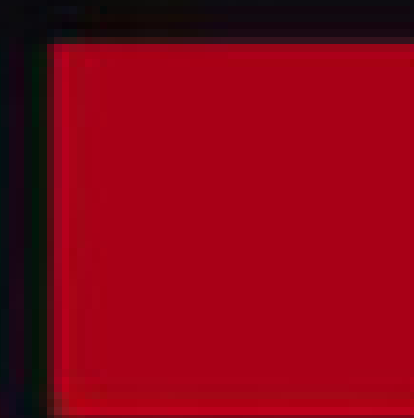
Sad to say, the romantic side to the plot is pure fiction. Maometto is besieging the Venetian colony of Negroponte (the present-day Greek island of Euboea). Erisso, the governor, wishes his daughter Anna to marry Calbo, one of his generals. Anna, however, is in love with 'Uberto', whom she had met in Corinth. He turns out to be none other than Maometto. When the city falls, Anna fiercely rejects the sultan. Maometto leaves to continue fighting; Anna begs her father to marry her to Calbo. On Maometto's return, she stabs herself by the tomb of her mother.

Rossini composed the opera in 1820, towards the end of his seven-year stint in Naples. The part of Anna was one of the many written for Isabella Colbran, the mistress who was to become his first wife. Lasting nearly three hours, *Maometto secondo* is laid out on a spacious scale.




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The first of the two acts has as its heart a *terzettone* (a 'big trio'), which incorporates a change of scene and a women's chorus. And Act 2 includes a fine *terzettino* – not all that little – as Calbo, Anna and Erisso bid one another farewell. In fact, the music throughout is quite excellent, and beautifully scored. It's extraordinary to find that last year's staging by Garsington Opera was the first in Britain; it has been well caught, live, in the company's first venture into commercial recording. There is some stage noise and applause but nothing too intrusive.

Siân Davies and Caitlin Hulcup are outstanding, and Paul Nilon brings a welcome touch of steel to Erisso. Darren Jeffery doesn't quite have the solidity and agility of Samuel Ramey on the Philips recording but he makes a Maometto to be reckoned with. David Parry keeps his forces well under control. A few passages are cut. The documentation includes the libretto and translation and an introduction by Richard Osborne. Now let's have a production at Covent Garden or Glyndebourne.

Richard Lawrence

Selected comparison:

Philb Orch, Scimone (6/85th) (PHIL) 475 5092PTR3

R Strauss

Capriccio

Renée Fleming *sop* **Countess Madeleine**
Bo Skovhus *bar* **Count**
Michael Schade *ten* **Flamand**
Markus Eiche *bar* **Olivier**
Angelika Kirchschlager *mez* **Clairon**
Kurt Rydl *bass* **La Roche**
Michael Roider *ten* **Taupe**
Íride Martínez *sop* **Italian Soprano**
Benjamin Bruns *ten* **Italian Tenor**
Clemens Unterreiner *bar* **Major-Domo**
Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera /
Christoph Eschenbach

Stage director **Marco Arturo Marelli**

Video director **Brian Large**

C Major Entertainment © ② DVD 715908;

© 716004 (163' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, June 27, 2013



Still a relative rarity in the opera house, Strauss's last opera benefits perhaps more than any of his other works from the good graces of divas. This new version, filmed at the Vienna Staatsoper in 2013, is thus the third DVD to feature Renée Fleming as the Countess, torn between personifications of words and music. For me, though, it doesn't displace

either of the previous versions. Marco Arturo Marelli's production, though lavish and elaborate, has little to say about the piece, and features an aesthetic of mirrors and blue-tinted, plastic rococo that feels tacky, and a poor match for the work's autumnal mutedness; the nudge-wink clowning that pops up now and then feels similarly misjudged. Dagmar Niefind's costumes represent a mixture of exaggerated and skewed period frocks, frock coats and wigs (the Count's outfit brings Blackadder's Lord Flashheart to mind); Fleming's own final kitschy outfit wraps her up in enormous bows front and back.

Surprisingly, the soprano never seems entirely at home in the role, either, and the conscious effort of her acting is all too noticeable. The voice itself is short on the trademark creaminess, and several phrases (up until the famous final scene at least, in which she returns to melting form) sound acidic and shrill. Nor is she very persuasive with the text: this Countess's preference for 'Ton' over 'Wort' is clear from the start. Bo Skovhus is lively if blustery as her brother; Michael Schade and Markus Eiche are suave and persuasive as Flamand and Olivier, the composer and poet fighting for her affections. Kurt Rydl's La Roche is overly forceful but authoritative. Angelika Kirchschlager is luxury casting as Clairon.

The greatest pleasure of the performance, for me, undoubtedly comes in the wonderful playing of the Staatsoper orchestra, the sweet, tender strings and the mellifluous horns in particular; and Christoph Eschenbach conducts a leisurely and loving account of Strauss's gorgeous score. The recorded sound reflects the house's acoustic in emphasising the orchestra – no bad thing here – and the picture quality is high; but the production and central performance never really get to the heart of the matter.

Hugo Shirley

R Strauss

Salome

Erika Sunnegårdh *sop* **Salome**
Mark S Doss *bass-bar* **Jokanaan**
Robert Brubaker *ten* **Herod**
Dalia Schachter *mez* **Herodias**
Mark Milhofer *ten* **Narraboth**
Nora Sourouzian *mez* **Page**
Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale, Bologna /
Nicola Luisotti

Stage director **Gabriele Lavia**

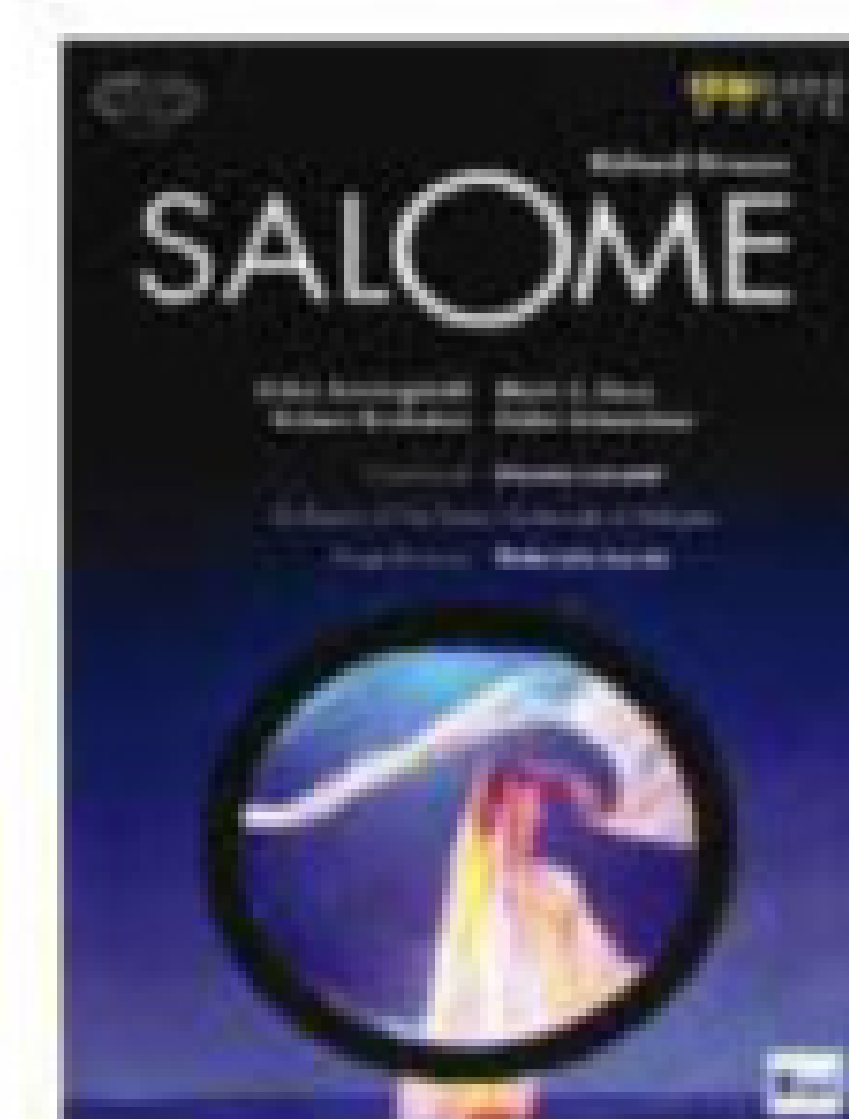
Video director **Andrea Bevilacqua**

ArtHaus Musik © DVD 101 699; © 108 096

(109' • NTSC • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.0,

DD5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, January 16, 2010



It's taken a little while for this *Salome*, filmed at Bologna's Teatro Comunale in early 2010,

to make it to DVD and Blu-ray, and I'm afraid it doesn't really offer much to get excited about. A primary problem is that Strauss's glitteringly seductive score comes across very badly. Nicola Luisotti paces the performance well enough but the Teatro Comunale orchestra is rather thin and scrabbly. The brass can be uncouth, the violins untidy; the recorded sound itself, meanwhile, is one-dimensional and dull.

Gabriele Lavia's production has plenty of stylish touches, with the floor of Alessandro Camera's set managing to evoke both fractured marble and, to my eyes at least, a military map. The action is updated to around the time of composition, which also means plenty of military uniforms and pointy Prussian helmets, and a fair number of extras standing around with spears, waiting, as we eventually find out, to dispatch Salome herself. Jokanaan is lifted out of a crevice in the floor; after his execution his decapitated body reappears feet first, while a vast stone head rises out of the centre of the stage. It's striking in its way but nowhere near as powerful – psychologically or visually – as what Wilde and Strauss originally called for. And most of what Lavia presents feels similarly superficial, not really adding much to one's understanding of the characters or their actions.

Erika Sunnegårdh is an experienced and impressive Salome, and she stays the course admirably here, cutting a svelte figure onstage; her dance, complete with full striptease, is unusually convincing, often glimpsed through a vast magnifying lens that descends from above. Mark S Doss's Jokanaan is powerful and forthright; no attempt is made to explain the character's existence in the updated setting. Robert Brubaker's Herod is vivid and emphatic; Dalia Schachter matches him with her Herodias. The secondary cast, though, is of very variable quality. It's difficult to recommend this release ahead of other filmed versions of this work – I'd certainly opt for Nikolaus Lehnhoff's more thoughtfully and effectively updated staging for Baden-Baden, not least because of its vastly superior orchestral playing.

Hugo Shirley

Selected comparison:

DSO Berlin, Soltész (5/12) (ARTH)

DVD 101 593; 108 037

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

A cycle of Vaughan Williams symphonies from St Petersburg

Gennadi Rozhdestvensky's symphony cycle is Vaughan Williams as you've never heard him before

Smiling smugly to myself for dreaming up the headline 'Moscowpat music', the fact soon hit home that these riveting Vaughan Williams performances by the State Symphony Orchestra of the USSR Ministry of Culture were recorded not in Moscow but in the Grand Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic. Serves me right! Whether **Gennadi Rozhdestvensky's** 1988/89 run of broadcasts was Russia's first-ever experience of the complete Vaughan Williams symphonic canon I cannot say but I'm pretty sure that Melodiya's six-disc release of the cycle – issued as part of the label's

'Throughout the cycle, what most impresses is the sensitivity of the orchestra's soft, ethereal string-playing'

50th-anniversary celebrations – is the debut Russian disc coverage of this endlessly fascinating repertoire. And the performances are highly revealing, or at least most of them are. Any sign of cowpat has been well and truly concreted over: Rozhdestvensky makes this music sound urban, high-rise, occasionally sinister, and loving in a very human way. There is nothing in the local catalogue even remotely like it.

I initially wondered whether the exalted opening of the *Sea Symphony* (heard here at its St Petersburg premiere) was being proclaimed in Russian. Well, it isn't, but a little later you'll need to listen very closely to recognise Whitman's 'today a rude brief recitative, of ships sailing the seas...'

given that Boris Vasiliev's Russian accent is so strong. The performance is full of vigour (great low brass) and the choral singing is excellent. *Sinfonia antartica* also works exceedingly well, even though in this one case a lack of dynamic range tends to work against the music's impact. Great timpani and tam-tam at around 7'00" into the 'Landscape' but the organ lacks 'welly'.

Rozhdestvensky focuses the *London Symphony's* wide range of moods with an acute ear. Note how he rushes at the pivotal five-note figure that serves as a leitmotif in the first movement and how sensitively he shapes the succeeding *Lento*. The 'nocturnal' *Scherzo* sounds redolent of *Petrushka*; and while the Third and Fifth Symphonies are less appreciatively sensuous than they are under, say, André Previn, you can sense that Rozhdestvensky is relishing their rich harmonic language.

Most impressive are those two harrowing symphonic dramas, the Fourth and the Sixth. The former's first movement is taken very broadly, the finale's sideswiping syncopations all the more effective for having a slightly raucous edge to them. The opening of the Sixth has great urgency, though it isn't rushed. The 'Epilogue', on the other hand, clocks up over 14 minutes and must be the slowest I've ever heard. One can hardly help making comparisons with the equally desolate penultimate movement of a work that Rozhdestvensky knows and conducts so well, Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony. Yes, here as elsewhere, you need to mentally dismiss the odd irritating cough; but the effect is mesmerising, much like the *Scherzo*, which goes at

a fair lick and has everyone playing flat-out. Another great Russian, Serge Koussevitzky, was equally electrifying in this same movement.

Time and again throughout the cycle what most impresses is the sensitivity of the orchestra's soft, ethereal string-playing, particularly in the Sixth's finale and towards the end of the first movement of the Fourth. The Eighth is possibly the nearest Vaughan Williams ever came to sidling up to Prokofiev, stylistically, what with its pungent brass and percussion-writing. Rozhdestvensky and his players seem to be having a whale of time, though they relax for a deeply expressive account of the 'Cavatina'.

As to the Ninth, we've enjoyed fine versions from abroad under Stokowski and de Freitas Branco but Rozhdestvensky's version perhaps lays claim to being finer than either, the finale a raging oration, as conclusive a close to the cycle as any you could imagine. Although dating from the late 1980s I can't be absolutely sure that the recordings are digital (they don't sound it) but they're certainly more than adequate to the task of relating some extremely compelling music-making. Rozhdestvensky inspires a series of performances which, although not note-perfect, have a visionary quality that complements more familiar and dare I say more 'rural', home-grown cycles. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Vaughan Williams Symphonies
Nos 1-9 **State SO of the USSR**
Ministry of Culture /
Gennadi Rozhdestvensky
Melodiya ® ® MELCD100 2170



Gennadi Rozhdestvensky: visionary in Vaughan Williams

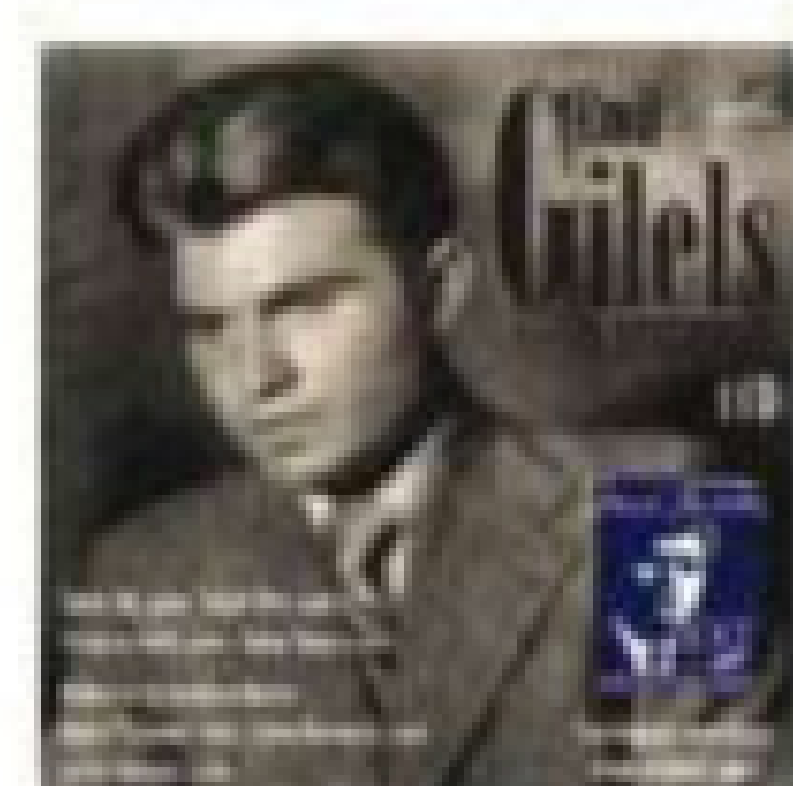
Gilels and friends

Another Melodiya box-set, four discs this time, anticipates **Emil Gilels**'s birth centenary by two years (at least according to most Western sources) with a selection of 'unreleased recordings from original tapes' from the 1940s and '50s. This particular collection focuses on 'Gilels in Ensembles'. Of especial note are recordings with two of his most gifted and brilliant pianist contemporaries, Yakov Flier and Yakov Zak, the partnership with Zak resulting in, among many memorable items, a dramatic take on Mozart's *Zauberflöte* Overture as arranged by Busoni, Mozart's two-piano Concerto, K365 (under Kyrill Kondrashin), and a sonorous but, where needed, virtuoso account of Brahms's *Haydn* Variations. Zak also partners Gilels for the appealing if rarely heard Saint-Saëns *Variations on a Theme by Beethoven*, sure proof of the versatile Frenchman's respect for classical style, and a disc of two-piano works by Rachmaninov (Suite No 2), Leonid Nikolayev, Chopin (Rondo, Op 73) and Liszt (*Concerto pathétique*). The partnership with Flier is restricted to two attractive pieces by César Cui.

Turning to duo sonatas, Gilels partners his sister, the violinist Elizaveta (a good if hardly exceptional player, at least not by world standards at the time), in Haydn's First Sonata and the distinguished Russian horn player Yakov Shapiro in Beethoven's Sonata, Op 17. Perhaps the most striking performance featured is of Brahms's First Piano Quartet with members of the Beethoven Quartet, recorded live in

1959 and with the occasional patch of iffy intonation from the strings, but fiery almost to a fault: the super-fast finale has to be heard to be believed. There's more too, music by Andrey Babayev and more Mozart, and while the (mono) sound is relatively constricted, Gilels is, as always, a class act and most of the performances will easily bear – even command – repeated listening.

THE RECORDING



'Emil Gilels in Ensembles'
Emil Gilels *pf* Various artists
Melodiya (M) (4) MELCD100 2210

Rostropovich rarities

Given that this instalment of Replay has a Russian theme, I'm catching up with a recent (rather than new) Supraphon two-disc release of **Mstislav Rostropovich** playing Shostakovich. There's a touch of confusion here in that the version of the First Cello Concerto with the Moscow Philharmonic under Alexander Gauk (October 6, 1959) is described as a 'world premiere recording' whereas it's almost certainly a recording of the Moscow premiere. The actual world premiere had been given two days earlier by Rostropovich with Mravinsky and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, in the Large Hall of the Leningrad Conservatoire. In any case, as a performance it isn't a patch on the one that Rostropovich gave at the end of May 1960 with the Czech Philharmonic under Kyrill Kondrashin, where, aside from Rostropovich himself

sounding more forceful and spontaneous than in Moscow, Kondrashin inspires a notably dynamic and highly inflected account of the orchestral score.

This same (mono) double-pack also includes a celebrated recording of the Cello Sonata from 1959 with the composer at the piano, proof of credentials when it comes to his brilliant piano-playing. As to the Second Cello Concerto, we're offered a recording from December 1967 with the Prague Symphony Orchestra under Evgeni Svetlanov. Performance-wise things take a little while to get going but by the time we reach 8'35" into the finale (the return of the whooping horn alarms, after cello and side drum have waged war), the performance is positively white-hot. In terms of this particular release, only the Rostropovich/Gauk First Concerto strikes me as comparatively dispensable.

THE RECORDING



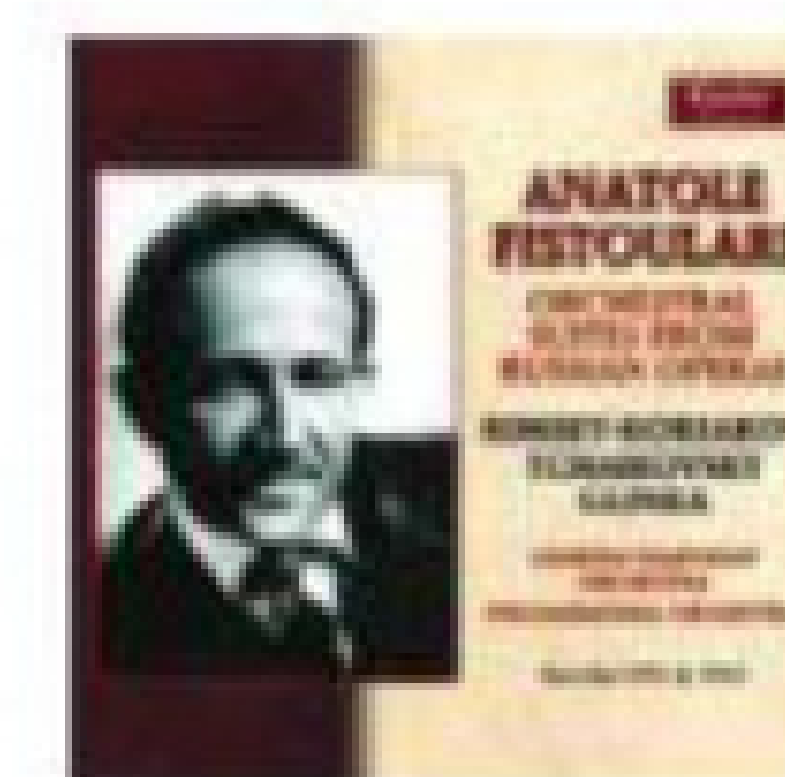
'Rostropovich plays Shostakovich'
Mstislav Rostropovich *vc*
Various artists
Supraphon (M) (2) SU4101-2

Vintage Russian bonbons

I was delighted to encounter, from a few years earlier (1951-53), Guild's warmly transferred collection of 'Orchestral Suites from Russian Operas' featuring the London Symphony and Philharmonia orchestras under the consistently stylish direction of **Anatole Fistoulari**. A suite of pieces from Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* opens to a gutsy but sensibly paced account of the Overture, progresses through 16 minutes' worth of colourful dances and closes with an exotic-sounding 'Chernomor's March'.

Rimsky-Korsakov's more sinister *Ivan the Terrible* Suite includes an interesting 'Royal Hunt and Storm' that nods respectfully in Berlioz's direction. As to the suite of extracts from *The Tsarina's Slippers* by Tchaikovsky, the fantastical world of the composer's orchestral suites most readily springs to mind. The programme closes with one of Rimsky's finest overtures, *May Night*. An absorbing selection all in all, 73 minutes' worth treated to playing that is pointed, energetic and affectionately phrased: in other words, typical Fistoulari.

THE RECORDING



'Orchestral Suites from Russian Operas'
LSO; Philh Orch /
Anatole Fistoulari
Guild (G) GHCD2408

Books



Colin Anderson reads a personal collection of musician interviews:

'Keeping us in touch with now-deceased public figures and their memories is a significant part of this book'



Jed Distler reviews a re-published biography of a great pianist:

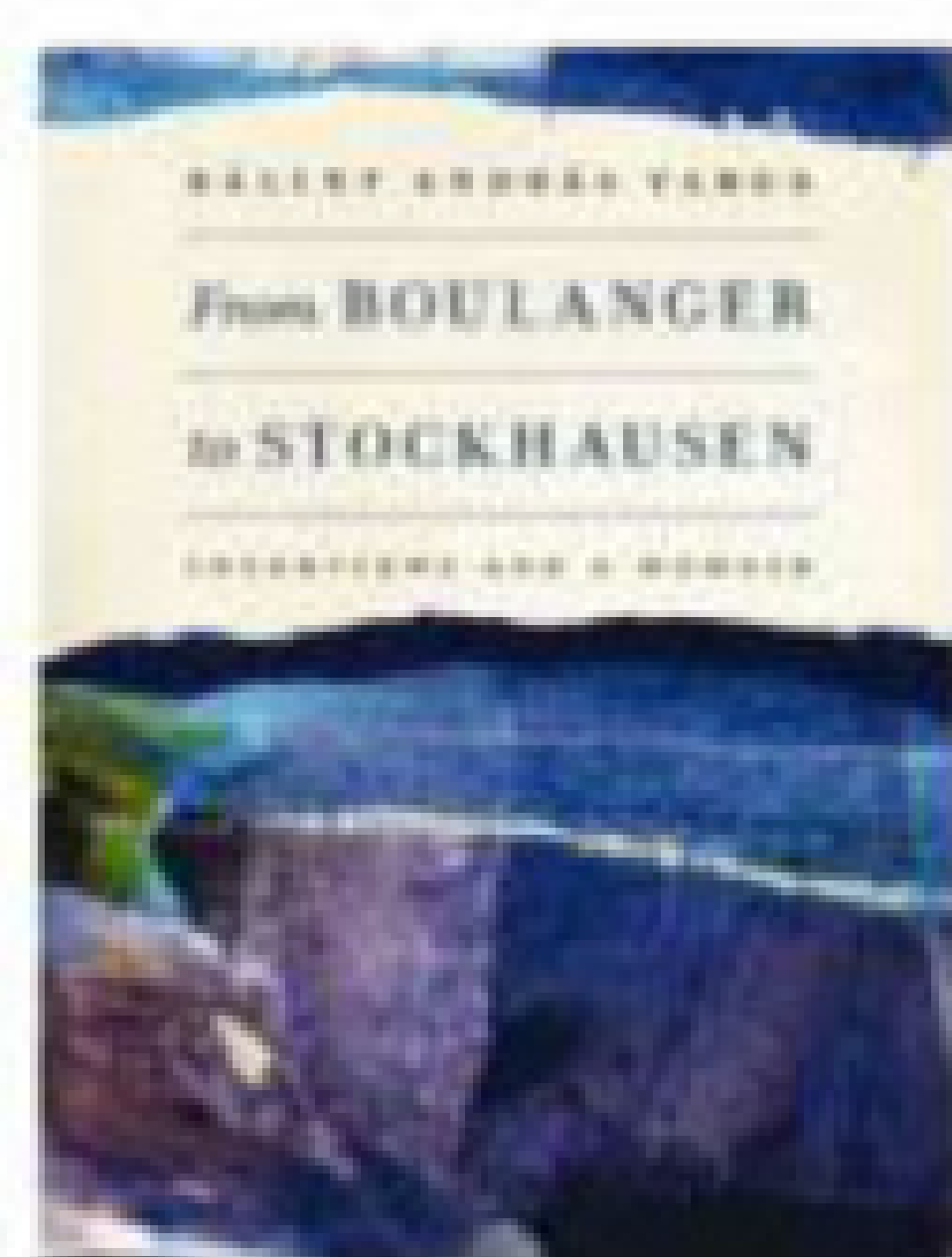
'The first extensive study devoted to Godowsky is an informative and vividly written biography'

From Boulanger to Stockhausen

Interviews and a Memoir

By Bálint András Varga

University of Rochester Press/Boydell & Brewer, HB, 410pp, £25. ISBN 978-1-58046-439-0



Anyone perusing this title with an innocent eye may well wonder if Bálint András Varga has hit upon a link, however oblique, between the aesthetics of the pedagogue Nadia Boulanger and the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. Not so, although the subtitle, 'Interviews and a Memoir', brings us closer to the book's *raison d'être*. It is both a collection of conversations, mostly new to publication, certainly in these English versions, and a 'Memoir' that is personal to Mr Varga. However, although two famous personalities have been chosen to highlight this publication's diversity, strictly speaking in a 'from-to' sense it should be from the conductor Claudio Abbado to the violinist Tibor Varga (the latter no relation to the book's author). The recently deceased Abbado features as one of a number of 'Snippets', in which the chosen subject can be read for a single sheet or so from a larger article, whereas other interviewees are given full vent, taking many pages, seemingly transcribed verbatim. Varga has clearly taken much care over the book's production. Maybe the translation into English (using American spelling) has caused the occasional confusion but such instances are few and far between; and the font style and size is agreeably readable, although one wonders why numerous commendations for the book (from, inter alios, Riccardo Chailly and András Schiff) are duplicated on the outside cover and inside the tome itself.

The dialogues, dated at the end of each one, together with the location, quite often Budapest, cover a nice mix ranging from internationally renowned musicians

who have been kindly treated by posterity to those who will be known but whose standing, even when alive, may have been somewhat peripheral. To have Alois Hába, Ernst Bour and Hans Swarowsky in their own words makes this hardback of particular value, making one wish to search out their music (Hába) and their recordings (Bour especially). Bigger names among performers include Alfred Brendel, Neville Marriner (90 this year and with his interview updated to include a postscript from 2012), Yehudi Menuhin, Eugene Ormandy, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Isaac Stern; composers include extensive conversations with György Kurtág and György Ligeti; and there are insights into management, shared with Varga by William Glock (so long associated with the BBC and, in particular, the Proms), Walter Legge (the record producer and founder of the Philharmonia Orchestra) and the long-lived Wolfgang Stresemann (1904-98), Intendant of the Berlin Philharmonic during the years when Karajan was its Principal Conductor.

Even longer-lived was Vlado Perlemuter (1904-2002), whose recordings of Ravel's piano music are so enlightening, his interpretations developed through contact with the composer. Yet, conversely, Arthur Rubinstein – Varga's debut interview, from 1966 – who also knew Ravel, says frankly that musicians cannot learn from composers. Other oddments include those taken from meetings with Aaron Copland, Antal Dorati, Witold Lutosławski, György Sándor and Walter Susskind, some being Bartók-centric, including Susskind referring to his pioneering recordings of the composer.

Keeping us in touch with now-deceased public figures and their memories is a significant part of this book. Sir Neville Cardus (1888-1975) knew both Elgar and Richard Strauss; Varga's description of the critic – then aged 82 – as being 'like a young boy' is rather endearing. It all helps light up the past, although beware of misinformation, for in the Glock section he is transcribed as

saying that Colin Davis went to Covent Garden (succeeding Georg Solti) in 1967: not so, it was three years later; 1967 was the year that Davis was appointed to the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

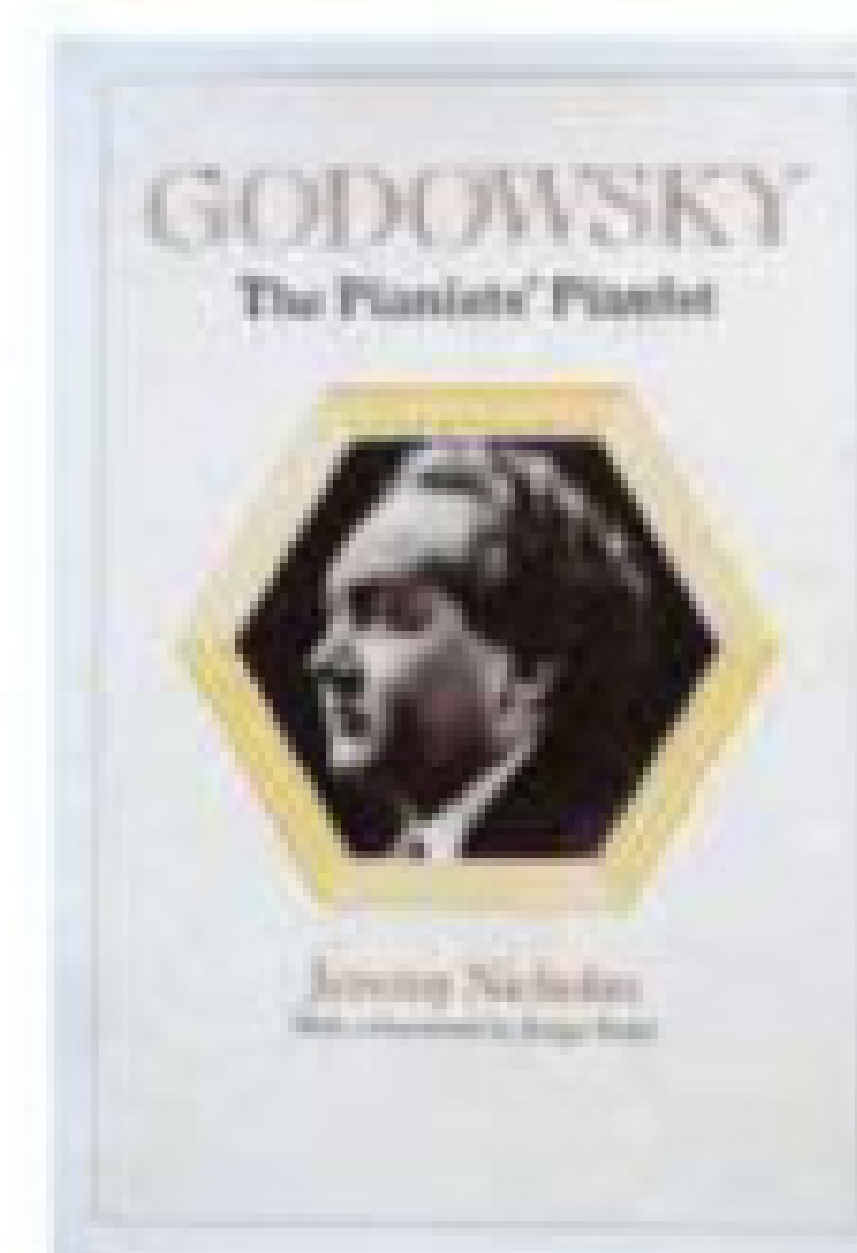
I like the way Varga sets the scene for each interview. He will describe the initial meeting and how his subject was dressed, the general mood and his first impressions of the person. It all helps the reader to feel as if they are present to 'eavesdrop' (as Varga puts it) on the conversation, warts and all, for Varga has not redacted what he now considers to be naive questions or any put-downs that he received in response; in this respect Ormandy is quite terse. Varga's own reminiscences, occupying some 100 pages, make for interesting reading. He can trace his family back to 1492; he himself was born in 1941 and takes us through his formative years in post-war Hungary and 'On Being Jewish'...and, as for Boulanger and Stockhausen, both are highlights. **Colin Anderson**

Godowsky – The Pianists' Pianist

By Jeremy Nicholas

Travis & Emery, HB, 402pp, £24.95

ISBN 978-1-84955-128-1



Godowsky – The Pianists' Pianist, written by
Gramophone contributor

Jeremy Nicholas, was the first extensive study devoted to the life and work of Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938). Originally published by APR in 1989 and long out of print, the book now resurfaces 25 years later courtesy of Travis & Emery, one of London's premiere bookshops. Its 345 numbered pages essentially fall into two parts. The first 151 pages are given over to an informative and vividly written biography resulting from 10 years of meticulous research, abetted by the Godowsky family's generous archival access. The book's remaining half contains



Leopold Godowsky: a forward-looking pianist

reference-material appendices. Here one finds comprehensive lists of Godowsky's disc recordings, piano rolls and compositions (including transcriptions and teaching pieces), a large though not necessarily complete list of Godowsky compositions recorded by other pianists, selected recital programmes, and Godowsky's extensive draft plan for a 'World Synod of Music and Musicians' and an extensive, idealised music education curriculum that never came to fruition yet abounds with ideals that remain relevant nearly 80 years after the fact. Nicholas's preface to the new edition acknowledges the wealth of Godowsky recordings and publications that have appeared since 1989, together with numerous online resources. For example, recordings of Godowsky works were rare events 25 years ago, whereas the current catalogue boasts multiple versions of everything from miniature sets like the charming *Walzermasken* and *Triakontameron* and the large-scale Strauss transcriptions to the ambitious five-movement Piano Sonata (1911), the Passacaglia based on the first eight bars of Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony and the celebrated (indeed, infamous) *Studies on Chopin's Etudes*.

Born in the small town of Soshly near Vilnius on February 13, 1870, Godowsky's prodigious technique and musicianship seemed to spring from out of nowhere despite his lack of formal training. He made his debut at nine and, as a teen, received advice from Saint-Saëns. At 14 he toured the United States for the first time, and he began his teaching career in New York in 1890, moving on to the Chicago Conservatory. He became famous for lengthy, demanding programmes and solidified his international reputation in December 1900 with a highly acclaimed Berlin concert featuring concertos by Brahms and Tchaikovsky bracketing an extended solo group that included several of his Chopin studies. Pianist colleagues of all ages began to look upon Godowsky with awe. Nicholas unearths colourful letters in which Godowsky describes 'shop talk' summit meetings between himself and Liszt pupils Arthur Friedheim and Moriz Rosenthal, with the irrepressible Vladimir de Pachmann in tow. Correspondence also reveals Godowsky's uncanny prescience on certain topics, such as his detailed description of how the burgeoning industry of international air travel would radically change the world and society.

Wherever Godowsky, his wife and his four children made their home, an expansive, open-door party atmosphere prevailed, where everyone, from luminaries from the arts to family friends, was welcome to drop in at any time to eat, drink, make music and converse. Nicholas cites Abram Chasins's much quoted anecdote about Godowsky composing the aforementioned Passacaglia surrounded by people. The pianist finally looked up from his manuscript paper, only to discover that most of the guests had left, to his disappointment. On the other hand, in 1915, an imminent composing deadline compelled Godowsky to hide out of sight for several days without telling his family, resulting in an intensive police search and prominent newspaper headlines. Such attention indicates the measure of Godowsky's renown.

The pianist's final years were plagued by misfortune and bitterness. The 1929 stock market crash significantly depleted his assets. On June 17, 1930, Godowsky suffered a stroke during a recording session and was never able to perform in public again. He continued to play the piano at home but never seriously composed again. Two years later Godowsky's youngest son Gordon, from whom he was estranged, committed suicide, and his wife of 42 years died in 1933.

Even at the height of his fame, critical consensus among professionals maintained that the full measure of Godowsky's singular pianism only manifested itself when playing at home for friends and colleagues, as opposed to his inhibition on the concert platform. This is often the case concerning Godowsky's recordings. 'The playing is precise, elegant, poised, efficient,' Nicholas writes, 'but rarely do we glimpse the personality behind the playing.' He observes how Godowsky often gives undue prominence to simple accompanying figures, so that the melodic right hand fights against an unintended contrapuntal texture. No question that this resulted from Godowsky's fastidious attempts to accommodate the recording devices' limitations by re-fingering works, re-balancing the hands, re-phrasing passages and the like. Although detailed discussion about Godowsky's creative output lies outside this book's scope, Nicholas presents fair and balanced musical assessments that clearly substantiate Rachmaninov's claim to the effect that 'Godowsky is the only musician of this age who has given a lasting, a real contribution to the development of piano music'. **Jed Distler**

Classics RECONSIDERED



Hugo Shirley and **Richard Fairman** find themselves won over by a recording that took many years to be fully appreciated, as the original reviews illustrate



Schubert

Winterreise, D911

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau bar **Jörg Demus** pf
DG © 447 421-2GOR (71' • ADD • T/t)

What the reader will want to know is how does Fischer-Dieskau's latest interpretation compare with his second (11/63). The latter notably fined down some dramatic outbursts and eliminated some unnecessary verbal pointmaking. He has now gone further in these directions, but the differences are so slight as to make it impossible to list them.

I must confess that Fischer-Dieskau's second recording remains my choice,

mainly because Gerald Moore's playing was even more superb than before. There is much to admire in Jörg Demus's playing but it is not of this calibre, tiresome as it may seem to have to go on saying this.

Alec Robertson (6/66)

That this is the most interior, unadorned and undemonstrative of Fischer-Dieskau's readings perhaps arises from the fact that Demus, a discerning musician and sure accompanist, is the most reflective of all the singer's many partners in the cycle. Demus never strikes out on his own, is always there

unobtrusively and subtly supportive, with the right colour and phrasing, literally in hand. Given an intimate, slightly dry recording, finely remastered, the whole effect is of a pair communing with each other and stating the sad, distraught message of Schubert's bleak work in terms of a personal message to the listener in the home.

With this deeply rewarding performance now at mid-price, all other baritone versions are severely challenged. Certainly if you want Fischer-Dieskau in the cycle you need look no further. **Alan Blyth** (8/95)

Hugo Shirley This was my first-ever recording of *Winterreise*, and I bought it when it came out as one of the earliest batch of DG's 'Originals' series. Returning to it now, my initial impression is that there's a lot to admire. There's extraordinary artistry from Fischer-Dieskau but it feels very much an 'interpretation': artful and intelligent, but not 'lived'.

Richard Fairman I'm not sure I entirely agree with you; but before we get down to that, I should outline my own journey to this recording. I grew up with Fischer-Dieskau's 1972 *Winterreise*, the DG one with Gerald Moore (1/73). I don't remember why I bought it but the three-LP set of the song-cycles was the sole recording I chose to take with me to university. I was seduced by the beauty of Fischer-Dieskau's voice and he made me fall in love with Schubert Lieder. That much doesn't change. I hadn't heard this particular *Winterreise*, though, until a copy arrived so that we could have this conversation. As this was your first, can I ask how you felt about it when you bought it?

HS It was my introduction not only to *Winterreise* but also to Fischer-Dieskau and Schubert Lieder in general. For a long time those last two were completely synonymous for me. And we could probably debate at length about which of his several recordings – each of them, at least from the 1950s to early '70s, probably as worthy of classic status as this one – the voice sounds best in. Most from that era were with Moore, though, and this one features Jörg Demus, who brings a lighter, more restrained touch. Do you agree, and do you think that brings something extra special – or different, at least – from Fischer-Dieskau?

RF Yes, the first thing that strikes me about this recording is how straightforward Demus is as the accompanist – clean, clear, unassuming, rhythmically precise, limited tonal palette, quite different from the emotional warmth that I was used to with Moore. I really enjoy Demus's playing but I'm not sure how well it fits with what Fischer-Dieskau is doing.

HS That's pretty much how I feel, and even a comparison of Moore in the first

minute of the cycle is instructive. Demus's accents feel like just that, whereas I get the sense Moore is really trying to portray a lot more with his: pain, frustration, loneliness. The tension between Demus and Fischer-Dieskau that you describe, meanwhile, actually seems to emphasise some of the Fischer-Dieskau mannerisms – and the dry, clinical engineering doesn't help much either.

RF I am inclined to agree with that, though I would like to do some detailed comparisons before I finally make up my mind.

HS Against Demus's cool, relatively undemonstrative background, Fischer-Dieskau's attempts to inject drama can sound forceful and hectoring – 'Mut' is an example of that. On the other hand, though, the self-effacing accompaniment does encourage some wonderful quiet singing: the hushed concentration at the start of 'Einsamkeit', for example, is exquisite.

RF I wonder whether we might see Demus as ahead of his time. His unaffected playing



Fischer-Dieskau (left) with Demus at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, c1965

has a touch of period-performance style about it. He is so resolutely not romantic and that would fit perfectly with some of today's leading Schubert singers, such as Christian Gerhaher and Werner Güra. Goodness, even Jonas Kaufmann was cool and understated when he sang *Winterreise* in the Royal Opera House earlier this year, an approach that is largely seconded by his recording. Demus would have made an ideal partner for him.

HS It's interesting that we find ourselves drawn to discussing Demus's contribution, which is probably what makes this recording unusual. You're right, too, that it has something of period-instrument performance about it, so little sense do you get of the full, warm sound of a concert grand (although I guess we have to assume that's what he's playing). But how do you think we can best describe Fischer-Dieskau's interpretation here, and do you think he manages to adjust to what Demus is doing, or is he more comfortable with Moore?

RF Well, you've sent me back to listen to my old DG Fischer-Dieskau/Moore recording, and of course it doesn't come out as I had expected. I have made direct comparisons on three songs – 'Irrlicht', 'Einsamkeit' and 'Letzte Hoffnung' – and in each case, though the differences are very small, I am preferring the Demus-accompanied recording. While Moore is appealingly warmer, I find Fischer-Dieskau is tempted

into pushing the emotional contrasts a touch too hard. I'm sorry about this, but I am in the process of changing my loyalty!

HS It's difficult to disagree when it comes to those songs. Their 'Letzte Hoffnung' is certainly a mini-masterpiece and the lyrical outpouring at the final line is wonderful.

RF He sounds so fresh with Demus there.

HS Similarly, the final verse of 'Gute Nacht' is of remarkable delicacy, with Demus, already so quiet throughout, managing to find an extra *piano* in his dynamic. But what do you think about Fischer-Dieskau's voice *per se*? The blurb tells us that it was never more beautiful than at this time. One can hardly deny that that's true at the lower dynamics but for me it feels pushed and blustery in the louder passages in a way we don't hear from singers today: you can almost imagine him shaking his fist exaggeratedly along with the reiterations of 'Des ganzen Winters Eis!' in 'Gefrorene Tränen', for example, so emphatic does he sound.

RF Maybe that came from him singing Lieder in such big halls. I even saw him several times – one all-Schubert evening included – in the Royal Albert Hall. Of course, some of today's singers are just as involved as Fischer-Dieskau is here: I remember how Alice Coote lived the agony in the first person at Wigmore Hall

a couple of years ago, and even Gerald Finley on his recent Hyperion disc (4/14) is not beyond underlining salient points. Are you saying that you prefer your Schubert sung in a purer, simpler way?

HS That's not exactly what I was trying to get at. My problem's less with the underlining that Fischer-Dieskau does than with the way his voice does it: there's that almost brittleness to the timbre, that lack of depth, and as such we get strong premonitions of the hectoring that would become so prominent in his later career. And it's certainly very different, in terms of vocalism, from Finley, whose voice is so smooth across the dynamic range and from top to bottom. But, then again, it certainly isn't just about the voice. And strangely enough, the more I listen, the more I'm finding myself won over to Fischer-Dieskau's approach.

RF That's funny. So am I. I've been dipping into individual songs with other singers and each time I return to Fischer-Dieskau I find him the most consistently involving. Although details may niggle, the psychology of the winter traveller seems most convincingly thought through.

HS It's easy, perhaps, to take him for granted, and I remember feeling a certain desire to rebel against the Fischer-Dieskau hegemony in Lieder when I started listening to other singers in the repertoire, hearing what other voices could bring to Schubert in general and this cycle in particular. I still don't perhaps feel totally emotionally involved in this recording, as I said at the start, but there's more to singing Lieder than just that. And it's a sign of the recording's quality that it seems we've both become more convinced by it the more we listen to it, which is no doubt better than the other way around.

RF That's certainly the case with me. Each time I have turned back to it, the more I like it. Perhaps I could finish with a personal memory. I only heard Fischer-Dieskau sing *Winterreise* live once, which was at the Edinburgh Festival, and I was surprised how much more straightforward he was than in the DG Moore recording I already knew. Perhaps he felt he had to give something extra in recordings, because he knew they would be heard time and time again. That would explain his constant searching for new meanings. And also the sheer number of his *Winterreise* recordings. At any rate, this one has become an important addition to my collection, and yes – deservedly a classic. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Music for Shakespeare's The Tempest

The strange and magical world of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has inspired music spanning more than 400 years. Here **Andrew Mellor** picks the most remarkable pieces and recommends a recording for each

It's not the proliferation of songs that makes *The Tempest* Shakespeare's most musical play; it's the work's unrelentingly odd, fascinating and tantalising narrative realm – a world of artful noises, enchantments and conjuring tricks. In *The Tempest* nothing is certain. Illusion, disillusion and unpredictability collide on Shakespeare's curious island, an island that may well sit on the Mediterranean fault line separating European order and North African excitability, but then again may not.

And what an invitation this strange world poses for creators of the abstracted, floating art of music. The first to be indulged was Robert Johnson, chief lutenist at the

court of James I and the man who wrote a handful of songs for Shakespeare's original production under the Bard's direction. Two of them survive – simple but shapely settings of Ariel's songs 'Full fathom five' and 'Where the bee sucks'.

At that first run, some time around 1611, *The Tempest* wasn't exactly immortalised. Then in 1642 the theatres closed, and only during the Restoration did the play reappear, right on cue for a new generation of English musicians including Matthew Locke and Henry Purcell to lend it their talents. When it became fashionable to stage Shakespeare with proto-Wagnerian grandeur a few centuries later, the likes of

Alexander Alyabyev and Jean Sibelius furnished it with luscious incidental music.

Full operatic treatment for *The Tempest* (picking up the mantle from the semi-operas of the early 1700s) didn't arrive until the second half of the 20th century, perhaps because a drama that consists mostly of people standing around having conversations didn't really suit the pre-war operatic aesthetic. The many songs have proved fertile ground for the likes of Thomas Adès. But you get the impression that he, and others, were drawn more to the play's strange musical atmosphere – for Shakespeare scholar Martin Butler, 'an autonomous theatrical laboratory with its own internal logic'. **G**



Fierce raged the tempest: 'Stormy Sea' by the Dutch artist Pieter Mulier the younger (c1637-1701)

PHOTOGRAPHY: HERITAGE IMAGE PARTNERSHIP LTD/ALAMY



- 10 Locke**
 'Music for The Tempest'
 Il Giardino Armonico /
 Giovanni Antonini
 Warner ⓑ 2564 64224-1 (2/99^R)

Locke (and others) wrote music for Thomas Shadwell's 1674 London production of *The Tempest* in the form of a semi-opera with dancing, songs and spoken dialogue (abridged sections of Shakespeare's text). His brief dances are prefaced by an extended 'Curtain Tune', rampantly atmospheric in this recording, and the first English score with expressive performance directions, including 'violent' for Locke's depiction of the storm that dashes Alonso's ship.



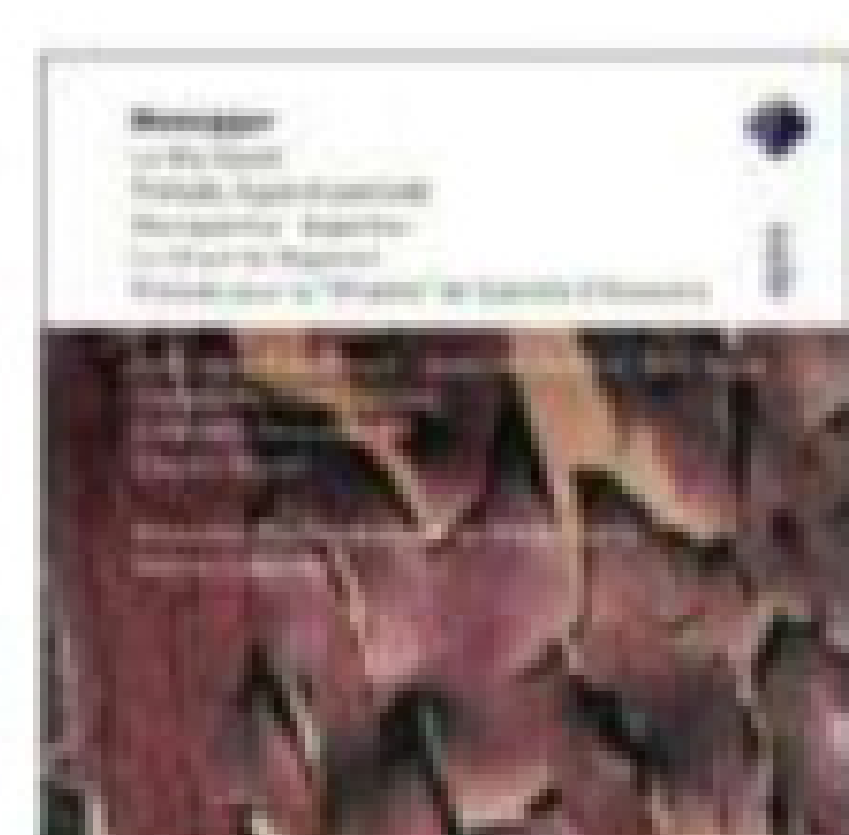
- 9 Purcell**
 The Tempest
 English Baroque Soloists /
 John Eliot Gardiner Erato
 Ⓢ ⓑ 2564 69842-0 (4/80^R)

Shadwell's 1674 production was replaced in the 1690s by a new staging with music by Purcell, whose theatrical instincts must have seemed as visionary in the 17th century as Wagner's would in the 19th. Listen hard and you might detect signs of Purcell's ability to reflect *The Tempest's* mysteries within the musical confines of the time. But even in Gardiner's hands, Purcell's *Tempest* is no *Dido* – despite its preoccupation with witches and witch-like music.



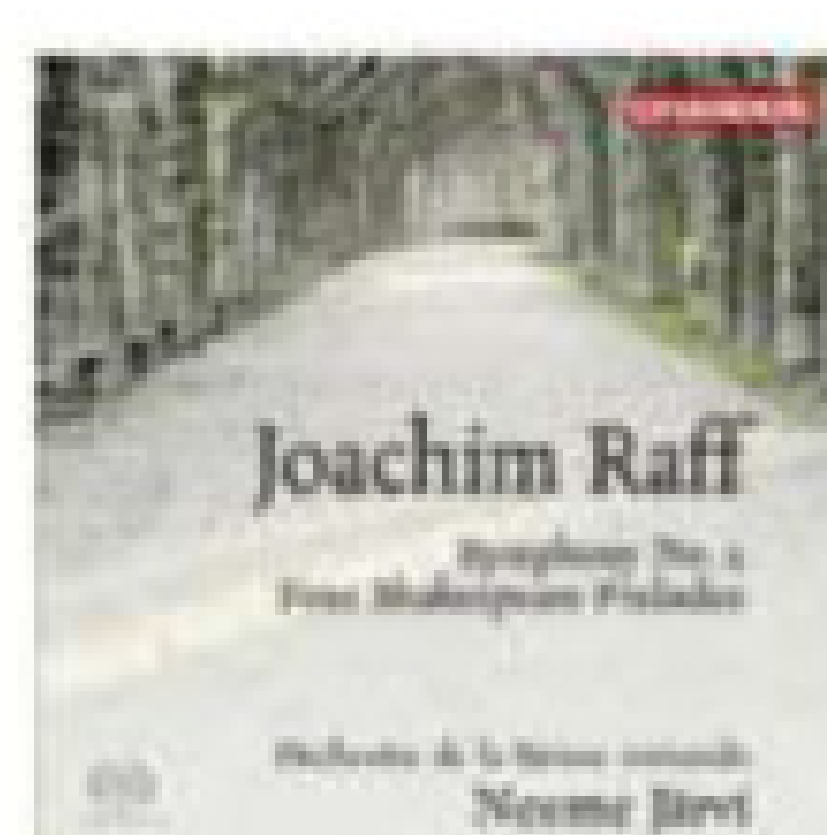
- 8 Linley**
 Music for The Tempest
 Julia Gooding *sop* The Parley
 of Instruments / Paul Nicholson
 Hyperion ⓑ CDH55256

Exactly a century after Shadwell's production, Thomas Linley from Bath was appointed Music Director of the Drury Lane Theatre. Three years later, in 1777, he wrote a sprawling score for a revival of *The Tempest* which replaced the opening scene with a long choral introduction and included new songs for Ariel (while also rearranging settings by Purcell, Arne and Weldon). Sub-Haydn, but as entertaining on this recording as it is technically hit-and-miss.



- 7 Honegger**
 Prelude for The Tempest
 Monte Carlo PO / Marius
 Constant Warner Ⓢ ⓑ
 2564 62033-2 (2/94^R)

The storm is no less deceitful than Shakespeare's other tricks in *The Tempest*, being suddenly brushed aside to reveal a serene island landscape, emphasising his 'theatre of the unreal'. That's an interesting proposition for composers, some of whom (notably Sibelius) underline the elements of make-believe and 'scenery'. Not so Honegger. In this recording of his chaotic Prelude you can imagine an orchestral stage listing suddenly, the musicians sliding uncontrollably about it.



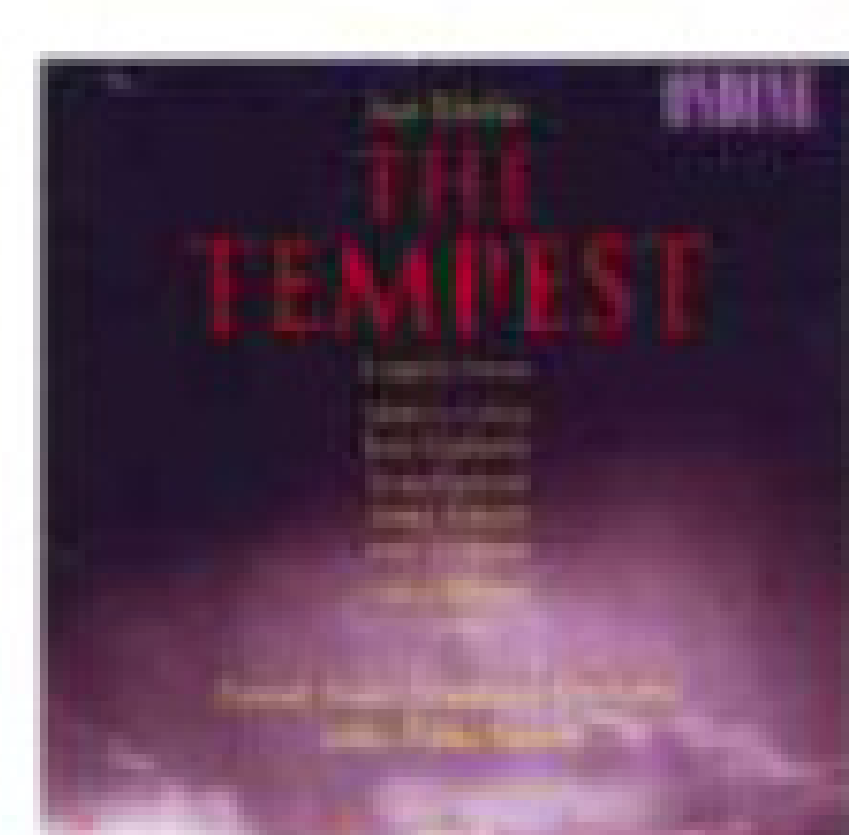
- 6 Raff**
 Prelude to The Tempest
 Suisse Romande Orchestra /
 Neeme Järvi
 Chandos Ⓢ CHSA5117 (4/13)

Joachim Raff's extended 1879 Prelude differs from Honegger's in that it's less an attempt to establish a mood and more a symphonic poem that moves from a brief (and polite) storm to twee sketches of Prospero, Ariel, Ferdinand, Miranda and Caliban (with some obvious 'episodes' thrown in). Musically it's all there: good tunes, post-Mendelssohnian orchestral panache and a seamless, pleasing structure. But not even Järvi can find sufficient magic in it.



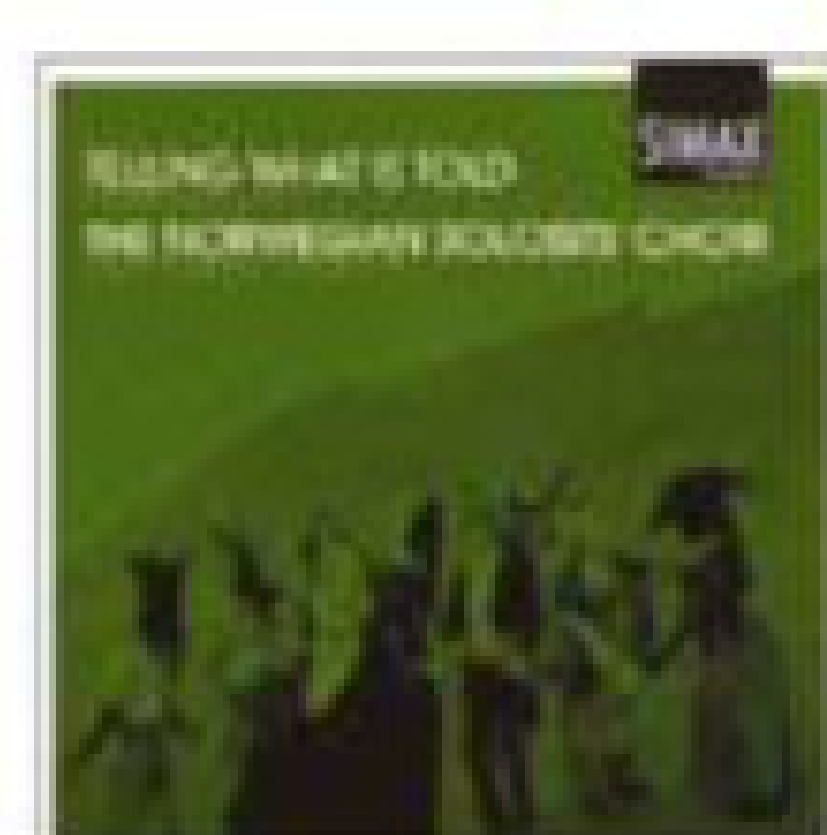
- 5 Tchaikovsky**
 The Tempest
 Berlin Philharmonic /
 Claudio Abbado
 DG Ⓢ 453 4962 (6/00)

Tchaikovsky once wrote in his diary that he was 'certainly no lover of Shakespeare'. But he also confessed that when writing his 'fantasy overture' after *The Tempest* in 1873 he felt 'under the influence of some supernatural force'. You hear it, and particularly with Abbado. The piece responds to the strange invitation of the play with some of Tchaikovsky's most odd musical tectonics and a typically tear-inducing picture of Miranda's instant love for Ferdinand.



- 4 Sibelius**
 The Tempest
 Soloists; Opera Festival
 Chorus; Finnish RSO /
 Jukka-Pekka Saraste

Ondine Ⓢ ODE813-2
 Sibelius finally agreed to write music based on *The Tempest* at a fascinating time: the months straddling 1925 and 1926. Apart from a minor choral work and the late Op 117 violin suite, only *Tapiola* and the destroyed Eighth Symphony drafts would follow. In its rare complete form here, the score is as texturally progressive and distilled as that chronology would suggest, while also bearing the nonchalance of total inspiration.



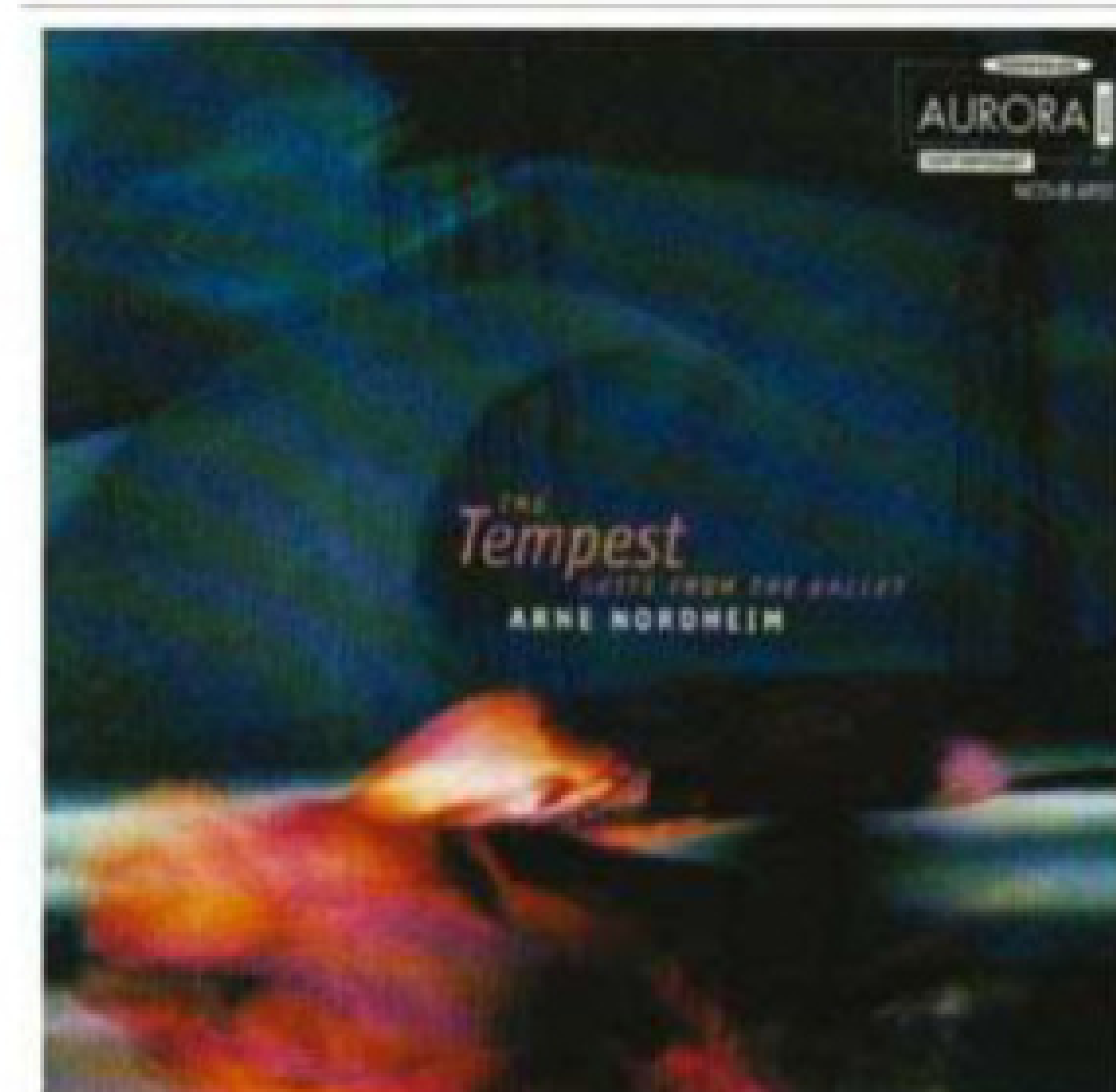
- 3 Martin**
 Five Songs of Ariel
 Norwegian Soloists' Choir /
 Grete Pedersen
 Simax Ⓢ PSC1298 (2/07)

This ravishing multi-composer disc 'Telling What is Told' is essential listening for anyone with a passing interest in the business of setting to music words whose genius is already established. Frank Martin could have been included for his full-length opera *Der Sturm* but I'll let his exquisite five songs stand in for that work here. Each is an acute picture of Martin's fascination with the spirit Ariel, and his ability to enhance a fine text with music, not diminish it.



- 2 Adès**
 The Tempest
 Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra
 of the Royal Opera House /
 Thomas Adès

EMI Ⓢ ⓑ 695234-2 (8/09)
 The strength of Adès's opera is in its meta-journey from storm-tossed confusion to what Tom Service describes as 'glinting, washed-clean consonance'. That capturing of Prospero's departure from his island is a wonder of music theatre: part moral triumph, part return from exile, part comedown from an acid trip to end all others. But there's a lot of introspective conversation in *The Tempest* that just isn't operatic, not even in Adès's hands.



- 1 Nordheim** The Tempest

Soloists; South German RSO / Charles Darden Aurora Ⓢ NCD-B4932 (8/80^R)

After years studying Shakespeare's text, Arne Nordheim opted to set his 1979 ballet score for orchestra with added electronics and two wordless human voices. Those elements, so astutely handled, immediately put Nordheim's score on a far weirder, more unsettling and unpredictable keel than any of the other settings on this list. 'Music can be compared to a time machine that propels forward both men and

action,' writes the composer in the booklet to this piercing 1980 recording. But Nordheim also succeeds in conjuring an auditory realm in which time as we know it – along with so many other anchors – doesn't exist. Utterly engrossing.



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THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

The transcendent powers of music

Orfeo ed Euridice, the opera in which Orpheus placates the Furies with his lyre to rescue his beloved, exists on many recordings in at least two versions. In **Gluck's** tercentenary year, **Richard Wigmore** picks the best

When the Habsburg imperial couple Maria Theresa and Francis I paraded into Vienna's Burgtheater on October 5, 1762, for the premiere of Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* they were doubtless anticipating a lightweight pastoral entertainment. The occasion – Emperor Francis's name day – and the opera's billing as an *azione teatrale* (literally 'theatrical action') promised as much. The imperial audience got their *deus ex machina* happy ending. But for the first two acts, at least, they experienced a work of startling intensity and novelty that integrated chorus, soloists and ballet in dramatic complexes and broke down the division between recitative and aria. One admiring reviewer wrote of the premiere, 'The action and music are highly effective and induce a sadness which penetrates deep into the soul.'

Orfeo's librettist, Ranieri de' Calzabigi, was an opportunistic adventurer and 'a great lover of women', in Casanova's expert judgement. He was also a passionate disciple of the French Enlightenment and, by 1760, an avid opponent of the excesses of Italian opera. His ideas chimed perfectly with Gluck's search for 'beautiful simplicity' and dramatic truth. Calzabigi took the archetypal story of Orpheus's descent to Hades to rescue Eurydice and pared it down to essentials. From the opening chorus of mourning, through the elementally moving contrast between Stygian darkness and dazzling light in Act 2, to Orpheus's famous climactic lament, 'Che farò senza Euridice?', Gluck created a drama of swift, shattering economy: a myth on the transcendent powers of music, and a milestone in operatic history.

Gluck, though, was one of those revolutionaries capable of betraying his own ideals. Twelve years later, he and librettist Pierre Louis Moline reworked *Orfeo* as *Orphée et Eurydice* for the Paris Opéra. Gluck added new arias and ballet numbers for dance-mad Paris – including the

torrential 'Air de Furies' and the otherworldly flute solo in the 'Ballet des ombres heureuses' (Dance of the Blessed Spirits) – and modernised the orchestration. In the opening tableau, the chalumeau and the cornett, with their fragile, other-worldly timbres, were replaced by the oboe and the clarinet. In Vienna the hero had been sung by the castrato Gaetano Guadagni, fêted for his delicacy of nuance and subtlety of declamation. The French, rational to the last, deemed castratos an offence against nature. So Gluck duly reworked the role for an *haute-contre*, a peculiarly French type of high tenor with falsetto-ish top notes, adding a bravura aria at the end of Act 1, 'L'espoir renaît dans mon âme' – just the sort of 'gothic and barbarous extravagance' that he and Calzabigi had sought to purge from opera.

The earliest opera to survive two generations of changing tastes, *Orphée* held the Paris stage for 60 years. By the mid-19th century, though, it had slipped out of the repertoire, not least because the *haute-contre* voice was now almost obsolete. Enter that passionate Gluck champion Hector Berlioz. In 1859, shortly after completing *Les Troyens*, he was engaged to prepare a production of *Orphée* for the prodigiously gifted mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot. Restoring Orpheus's vocal line to its original pitch, Berlioz tweaked the orchestration, jettisoned most of the 1774 ballet music and replaced the final chorus with the finale of Gluck's last opera, *Echo et Narcisse*. The Gluck–Berlioz–Viardot combination caused a predictable sensation. As the singer recorded, 'People embraced each other in the passageway during the intermissions, they wept, they laughed with delight, they trampled the floor . . . in a word, there was a turmoil, a jubilation such as I have never seen in Paris.'

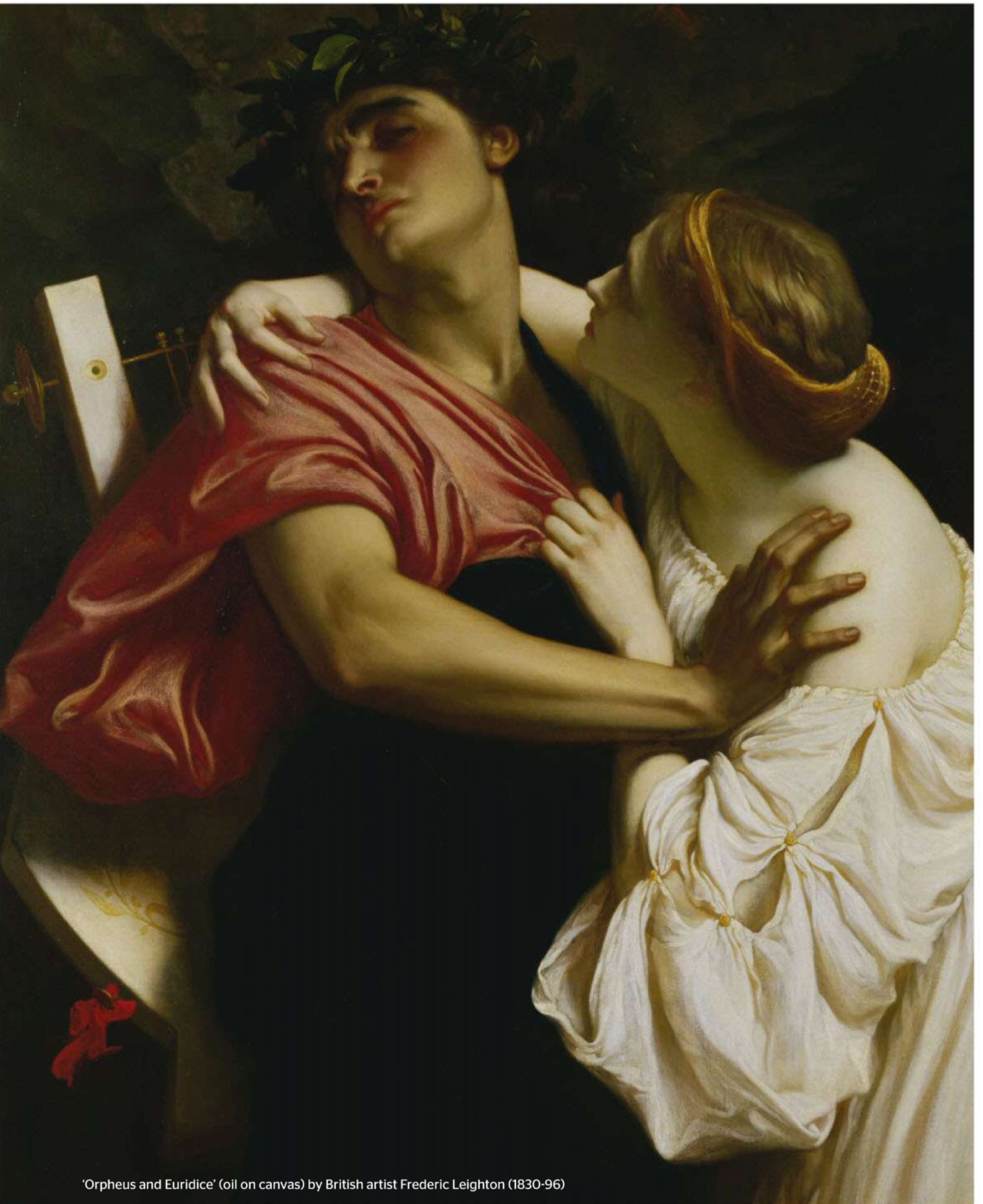
MEZZO-SOPRANOS REIGN

In essence it was the Berlioz version, in French or back-translated into Italian and

mingled with bits of the 1762 original, that held sway for more than a century. The title-role was still occasionally taken by a tenor, but with Viardot as imposing precedent, Orpheus became the province of mezzos and contraltos. On a 1940 broadcast from the Met, ponderously conducted by **Erich Leinsdorf**, the title-role is taken by the Wagnerian mezzo Kerstin Thorborg: dignified, very feminine-sounding, not always ideally steady. This may have its attractions as a period piece, but the sound is poor-to-excruciating, with pitch distortions, a murkily distant chorus, constant stage clatter and an irritatingly intrusive prompt (did anyone actually know their words?).

In England, with its enduring oratorio tradition, the part of Orpheus was long associated with the maternal contralto, a breed represented, supremely, by Kathleen Ferrier. The 1951 performance from Netherlands Opera, conducted by **Charles Bruck** and recorded in just-passable sound, remains an eloquent monument to the mingled warmth and grandeur of Ferrier's timbre and her expressive range. Orpheus's pleas to the Furies have an intense pathos, while 'Che farò' veers between anguish, outrage and haunting inwardness. On the downside, Ferrier's vibrato, as caught by the microphone, can be uncomfortably wide for modern tastes; Bruck's tempos are often sluggish; and neither the Cupid (Amor; or Amour in French versions of the opera) nor the Eurydice are remotely in Ferrier's vocal league. If you want Ferrier's Orpheus, go for this rather than the heavily cut 1947 Glyndebourne performance conducted by Fritz Stiedry.

In the late 1960s the Royal Opera House mounted a composite *Orfeo* (part-1762, part-1774, part-Berlioz) for Marilyn Horne, with her darkly brilliant timbre, huge range and spectacular coloratura technique. A latter-day Viardot, Horne is indeed mightily impressive, imperious in her bravura showpiece, complete with the



'Orpheus and Euridice' (oil on canvas) by British artist Frederic Leighton (1830-96)

surreal two-octave cadenza concocted by Viardot and Saint-Saëns, passionate in her encounter with the Furies. There is, though, a want of tenderness, both in Horne's singing and in **Sir Georg Solti's** conducting, by turns fiercely driven and heavily romanticised. Pilar Lorengar makes a sympathetic, if slightly fluttery, Eurydice, Helen Donath a charming Cupid.

Orpheus was the role of Janet Baker's operatic swansong at Glyndebourne, in a version conducted by **Raymond Leppard** which is essentially Berlioz translated into Italian, plus all the ballet music. By 1982 there was more than a dash of vinegar in Baker's tone. Yet, as ever, she sings with profound insight and understanding. No one quite matches Baker's mixture of other-worldliness and strange sadness in the sublime Elysian tone poem 'Che puro ciel', or distils such a mounting sense of panic in the Act 3 recitatives. While the Glyndebourne Chorus are splendid, neither the Eurydice (the edgy Elisabeth Speiser) nor the Cupid is memorable. Leppard coaxes lithe playing from the LPO; and if some of the ballet numbers sound over-fragrant, the 'Dance of the Blessed Spirits' – the most unearthly minuet in existence – and the flute solo are ravishingly beautiful.

BERLIOZ REVIVED

After these mix-and-match versions, two recordings appeared in French, based more or less faithfully on the 1859 Berlioz edition. Both are good. **John Eliot Gardiner's** Orpheus is Anne Sofie von Otter who, with her soft-grained mezzo, gives a subtle, introspective performance. Barbara Hendricks makes a fiery Eurydice, Brigitte Fournier a slender-toned Cupid. Gardiner conducts with a powerful dramatic sweep, drawing supple playing from the Lyons Opera Orchestra and bringing a sharp

feeling for gesture to the ballet numbers. In the opening tableau he restores Gluck's original chalumeau and cornett, obsolete by 1859. Also included from the 1774 version are the 'Air de Furies' (which Berlioz deemed dramatically nonsensical after Orpheus has reduced the Furies to pussycats) and the bittersweet trio 'Tendre Amour', filched by Gluck from his *Paride ed Elena*.

While von Otter exhibits a Classical restraint, Jennifer Larmore, in the recording conducted by **Donald Runnicles**, is ardent and forthright – closer, one imagines, to how Viardot would have sounded. She brings a steely determination to 'L'espoir renaît' and softens her naturally robust tone for an affecting 'J'ai perdu mon Eurydice' (ie 'Che farò'), the final verse tastefully ornamented. Dawn Upshaw makes a light-toned but spirited Eurydice, and Alison Hagley is a sparky Cupid. Runnicles gives the music a faint Romantic gloss, reasonable enough since this is Gluck viewed through a Berlioz prism. The one serious drawback is the recessed recording of what sounds like a vast chorus.

BACK TO 1762

Astonishingly, the original Italian *Orfeo* was only published in 1963. The earliest studio recording based on Gluck's 1762 score (plus the 'Air de Furies'), conducted by **Karl Richter**, is a travesty. As in German performances of Handel opera in the 1960s and beyond, the alto lead is transposed down an octave. The baritone hero is the omnivorous Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau at his most knowing and imposing. The infernal spirits never stand a chance here. Beyond this, the baritone voice sounds plain wrong, jarring with Gluck's delicate orchestration. Gundula Janowitz is the most limpid of Eurydices, Richter the most Teutonically marmoreal of conductors.

Although it in no way corresponds to the castrato in range or power, the countertenor voice, with its disembodied, other-worldly timbre, is apt for the symbolic nature of the hero, son of Apollo and god of song. The first countertenor Orpheus on disc, a decade before he swapped the larynx for the baton, was René Jacobs, with La Petite Bande under **Sigiswald Kuijken**. It's not a version that's worn well, despite some fine playing. Jacobs's tone is hooty and constricted, and he balloons into individual notes in a way that now sounds precious. Nor is the recording with James Bowman, conducted by **Jean-Claude Malgoire**, any better. Often an admirable singer, Bowman here sounds frail and detached. In fairness, Malgoire's clipped, plodding beat does him and his soprano colleagues few favours.

Far more compelling is the recording directed by **Hartmut Haenchen**. His Orpheus is Jochen Kowalski, whose countertenor in the 1980s was nonpareil in its resonance and almost-feminine sensuousness. Kowalski is especially impressive in his scene with the Furies, building the intensity gradually to a searing final plea. The boy singing Cupid sings brightly and neatly, but characterises blankly, while Dagmar Schellenberger-Ernst's Eurydice is long on indignation, short on tenderness. With his penchant for extreme speeds and stabbing accents, Haenchen is a controversial conductor, excitingly urgent in the Furies scene, blunt and graceless in the ballet numbers.

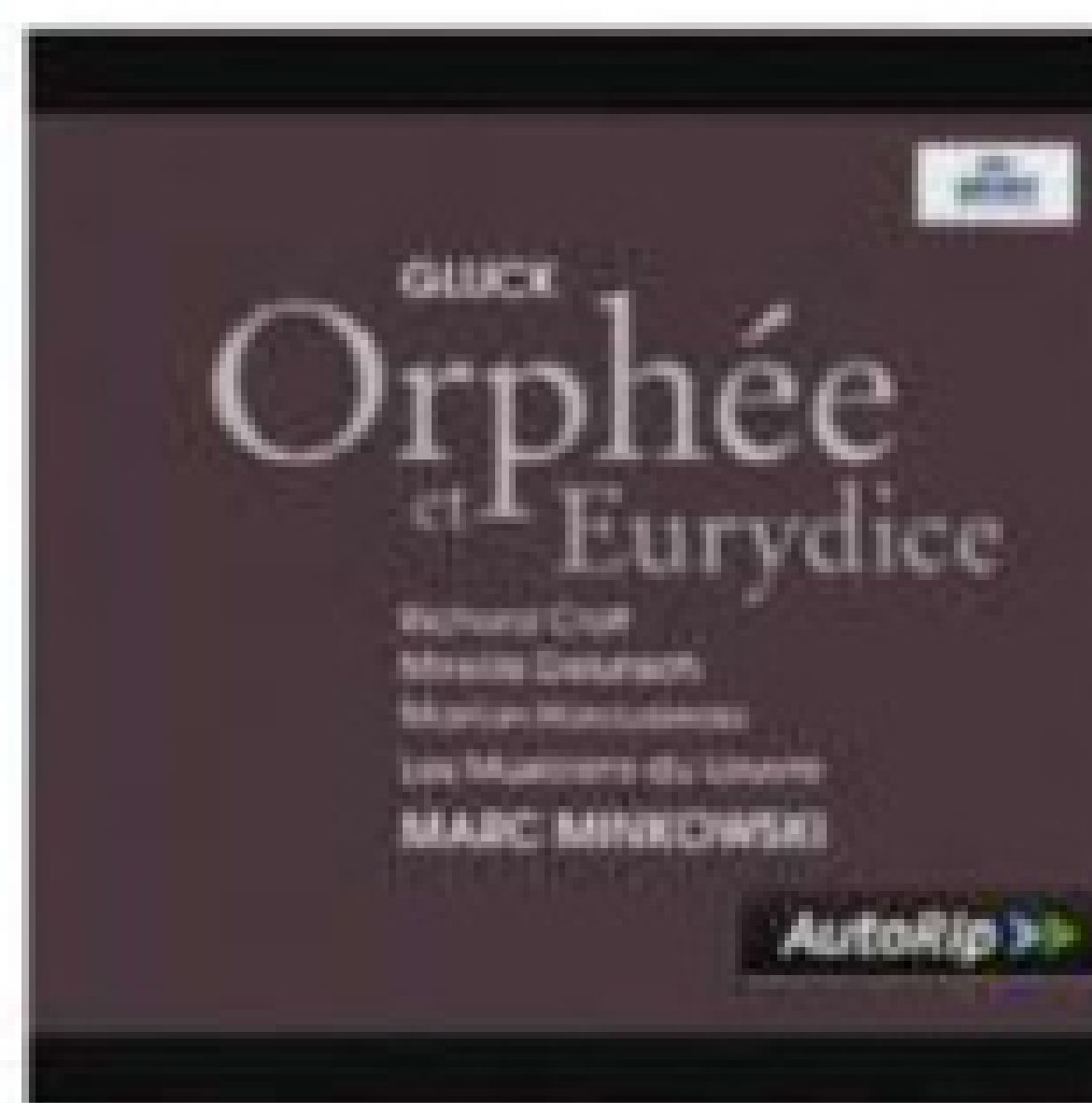
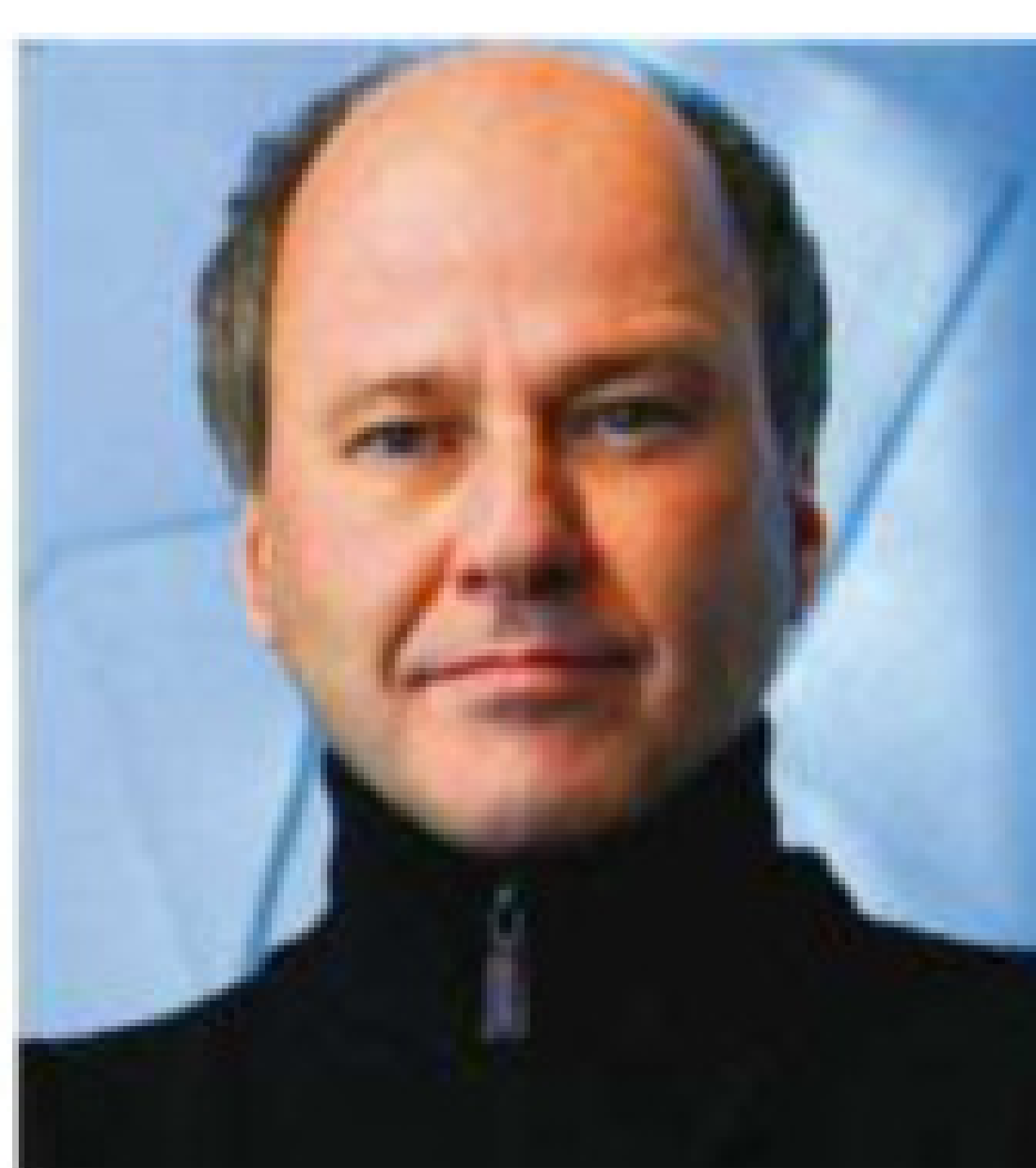
The most rarefied Orpheus on disc is Michael Chance, in a recording conducted by **Frieder Bernius**. Commentators in the 18th century wrote of the other-worldly beauty of Guadagni's voice, a description that could equally apply to Chance, who makes the hero as much mythical demigod as human lover. Frustratingly, Bernius's



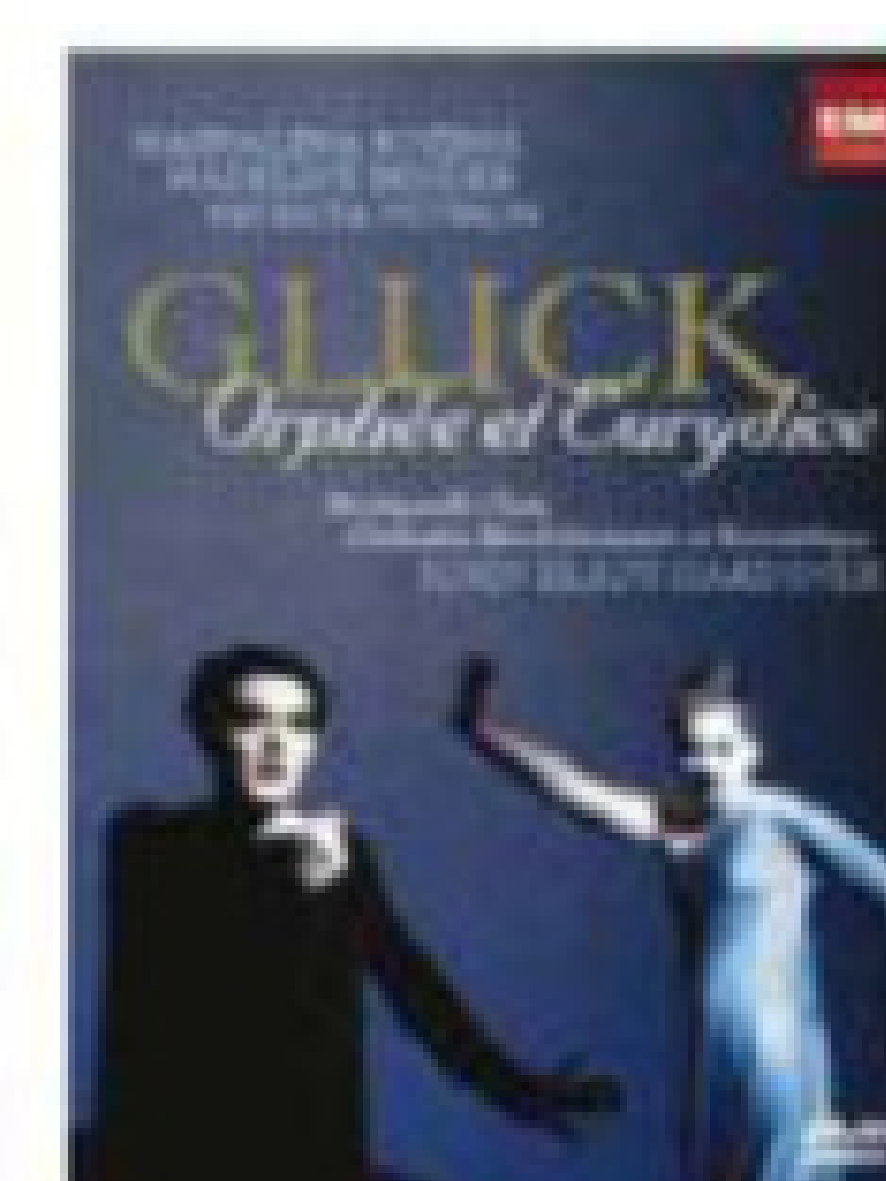
TOP COUNTERTENOR (1762 VERSION) **Derek Lee Ragin, Sylvia McNair, Cyndia Sieden, English Baroque Soloists / John Eliot Gardiner**

Decca © ② 478 3425DMO

Ragin (above) sings the title-role with a daring, no-holds-barred intensity, while Gardiner has an unerring feel for the pacing and unique *tinta* of Gluck's revolutionary opera.



**TOP TENOR (1774 VERSION)
Richard Croft, Mireille Delunsch, Marion
Housseau, Les Musiciens du Louvre /
Marc Minkowski** Archiv ④ 471 582-2AH2
Purists tend to regard the French *Orphée* as more dramatically diffuse than the original *Orfeo*. This exciting performance, with Richard Croft (above) both lyrical and heroic in the title-role, may make them think again.



DVD CHOICE (BERLIOZ VERSION) **Magdalena Kožená, Madeline Bender, Patricia Petibon, ORR / John Eliot Gardiner** EMI ④ DVD 216577 9

Despite controversial details, this stark, stylised production is true to the opera's Classical spirit. Cast, chorus and orchestra are superb, with the young Kožená a charismatic Orpheus, vocally and dramatically.

direction can be unfeelingly brisk, as in the pair of celestial choruses that close Act 2. There's another boy soprano as Cupid, and a sweet-toned but emotionally cool Eurydice in Nancy Argenta.

In stark contrast is **John Eliot Gardiner's** recording with countertenor Derek Lee Ragin. Where Chance's hero sublimates his grief in elegiac lyricism, Ragin conveys an almost shocking sense of Orpheus's pain. In his pleas with the Furies, some may find his sobs and plunges into a harsh chest register overdone. But Ragin's singing has an abandoned intensity unmatched by any other countertenor. Even in 'Che farò', Orpheus's self-control threatens to crack under the force of his anguish. His Eurydice, Sylvia McNair, is uncommonly feisty and word-alive. Gardiner's direction has far greater colour and atmosphere than Bernius's, with thrillingly incisive choral singing and an unflinching control of dramatic tension.

Countertenor hegemony is challenged by three versions of the original 1762 *Orfeo* with a mezzo-soprano hero. Two are instantly dispensable. In a Capriccio recording from Budapest, Júlia Hamari is a plummy-toned Orpheus, and **Ervin Lukács** conducts stodgily. Conversely, on the Naxos version recorded at performances in Drottningholm, **Arnold Östman's** tempos can be brisk to the point of impatience. To fit the performance on to a single CD, the final ballet sequence is cut, making the *lieto fine* seem more perfunctory than it need. Ann-Christine Biel – a pushed-down soprano rather than a true mezzo – is a dramatically pallid Orpheus. 'Che puro ciel' here sounds like a routine stroll through the local park rather than an expression of wonderment at the Elysian Fields.

Whereas Biel seems matter of fact in 'Che puro ciel', Bernarda Fink, on a Harmonia Mundi recording conducted by **René Jacobs**, conveys a sense of dazed ecstasy tinged with yearning. Fink's mezzo is pure, even and gently rounded; and throughout the opera her palpable dramatic involvement is tempered with Classical restraint. Her poignant pleas to the Furies suggest a surface control constantly threatened by barely suppressed passion; and her elegiac singing of 'Che farò', using Guadagni's own ornamentation, is one of the most beautiful on disc. From the explosive overture – written off by Berlioz as 'that incredible inanity' – Jacobs directs an urgent, pungently characterised reading. The RIAS Chamber Choir is a match for Gardiner's Monteverdi Choir, and both soprano soloists are excellent. Veronica Cangemi is a sensuous Eurydice; and Maria Cristina Kiehr injects a touch of



Christoph Willibald Gluck: born 300 years ago

coquettish spite into Cupid's song – this is Shakespeare's 'knaveish lad', relishing his power over poor helpless mortals.

THE HAUTE-CONTRE REVIVED

Contemporary reports suggest that the *haute-contre* Joseph Legros, for whom Gluck reworked the title-role in 1774, sang the part in full voice and with a 'heroic frisson'.

His successors, understandably, had to transfer some of Orpheus's crucifyingly high lines downwards, a practice followed in three of the five available versions with a tenor hero. The 1956 *Orphée* conducted, rather reverentially, by **Hans Rosbaud** is still cherishable for Léopold Simoneau's serene, elegantly moulded singing. In the tenor version Orpheus becomes a more heroic figure. With Simoneau, though, heroism is always tempered by dignity: and he wins over the Furies not by desperate entreaty but by gentle lyricism. But Simoneau and his Eurydice, Suzanne Danco, are surely too equable in their tense Act 3 exchanges.

Altogether more impassioned and assertive is the Orpheus of the young Nicolai Gedda in a recording assembled from performances in Paris in 1957.

Like Rosbaud, conductor **Louis de Froment** chooses old-fashioned, stately tempos and makes various unsanctioned cuts. Ensemble is sometimes rocky, and the chorus sounds mushy. But the recording is worth hearing for Gedda's ardour (high notes ring gloriously) and the distinctive Gallic timbres of Eurydice (Janine Micheau) and Cupid (the charming Liliane Berton).

Of the three modern recordings of the 1774 French *Orphée*, the US

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS		RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
Orfeo ed Euridice		
1940	Thorborg ^o , Novotna ^e , Farell ^c ; NY Met Op / Leinsdorf	Guild (B) (2) GHCD2317/18
1951	Ferrier ^o , Koeman ^e , Duval ^c ; Netherlands Op / Bruck	EMI (S) (3) 956284-2 (4/78 ^o)
1967	Fischer-Dieskau ^o , Janowitz ^e , Moser ^c ; Munich Bach Orch / Richter	DG (B) (2) 453 145-2GTA2 (5/69 ^o)
1969	Horne ^o , Lorengar ^e , Donath ^c ; Royal Op / Solti	Decca (B) (2) 417 410-2DM2 (6/70 ^o)
1978	Hamari ^o , Kincses ^e , Zempléni ^c ; Hungarian St Op / Lukács	Capriccio (M) (2) C51192
1982	Jacobs ^o , Kweksilber ^e , Falewicz ^c ; Petite Bande / S Kuijken	Accent (M) (2) ACC30023 (1/90 ^o)
1982	Baker ^o , Speiser ^e , Gale ^c ; LPO / Leppard	Erato (B) (2) 2564 68289-3 (2/83 ^o , 5/93 ^o); Warner (F) DVD 5046 73921-2 (1/05)
1989	Kowalski ^o , Schellenberger-Ernst ^e , Fliegner ^c ; CPE Bach CO / Haenchen	Capriccio (M) (2) C60008 (1/90)
1991	Ragin ^o , McNair ^e , Sieden ^c ; EBS / Gardiner	Decca (S) (2) 478 3425DMO (2/94 ^o , 9/97 ^o)
1992	Chance ^o , Argenta ^e , Beckerbauer ^c ; Tafelmusik / Bernius	Sony (F) (2) SX2K48040 (8/92 - nla)
1994	Bowman ^o , Dawson ^e , McFadden ^c ; Grande Ecurie et La Chambre du Roy / Malgoire	Auvidis (F) (2) E8538 (1/95 - nla)
1998	Biel ^o , Boog ^e , Avemo ^c ; Drottningholm Th Orch / Östman	Naxos (S) 8 660064
2001	Fink ^o , Cangemi ^e , Kiehr ^c ; Freiburg Baroque Orch / Jacobs	Harmonia Mundi (M) (2) HMC90 1742/3 (A/O1)
Orphée et Eurydice		
1956	Simoneau ^o , Danco ^e , Alarie ^c ; Lamoureux Orch / Rosbaud	Philips (B) (2) D 468 537-2PM2 (1/60 ^o , 5/93 ^o)
1957	Gedda ^o , Micheau ^e , Berton ^c ; Paris Cons Orch / Froment	Profil (M) (2) PH09021
1989	Von Otter ^o , Hendricks ^e , Fournier ^c ; Lyons Op / Gardiner	EMI (F) (2) 769834-2 (2/90 - nla)
1996	Larmore ^o , Upshaw ^e , Hagley ^c ; San Francisco Op / Runnicles	Teldec (F) (2) 4509 98418-2 (7/96 - nla)
1999	Kožená ^o , Bender ^e , Petibon ^c ; ORR / Gardiner	EMI (F) DVD 216577-9 (6/09)
2002	Fouchécourt ^o , Dubosc ^e , LeBlanc ^c ; Lafayette Op Orch / R Brown	Naxos (S) (2) 8 660185/6
2002	Croft ^o , Delunsch ^e , Harousseau ^c ; Musiciens du Louvre / Minkowski	Archiv (M) (2) 471 582-2AH2 (11/04)
2003	Kasarova ^o , Joshua ^e , York ^c ; Bavarian St Orch / Bolton	Farao (F) DVD D108045 (1/05)
2008	Alagna ^o , Gamberoni ^e , Barrard ^c ; Bologna Comunale Th Orch / Bisanti	Bel Air Classiques (F) DVD BAC052; (F) CD BAC452 (3/10)
2008	Wesseling ^o , Kleiter ^e , Im ^c ; Paris Op / Hengelbrock [sung in German]	Bel Air Classiques (F) DVD BAC044; (F) CD BAC444
2008	Flórez ^o , Garmendia ^e , Marianelli ^c ; Real Th, Madrid / López-Cobos	Decca (M) (2) 478 2197DH2 (6/10)

Key: ^oOrpheus ^eEurydice ^cCupid

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lecturer Elaine Padmore, former
Director of The Royal Opera.*



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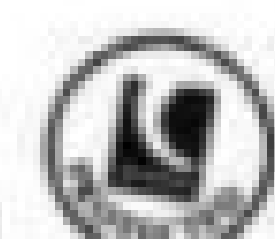
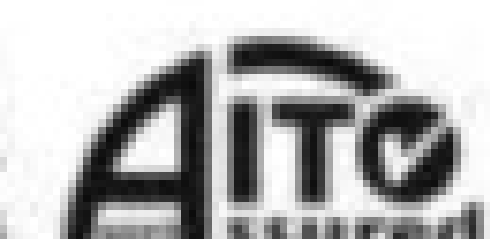
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Detail from Martin van Meytens's painting of Emperor Francis I, Maria Theresa and their family, 1756

period-instrument version conducted by **Ryan Brown** has many good things, not least a delightful airiness in the ballet numbers and a graphic orchestral characterisation of the Furies. Jean-Paul Fouchécourt is a true, light *haute-contre*, and his French declamation is a model. He brings a haunting sense of wonder to 'Quel nouveau ciel'. Elsewhere, though, pleasure can be mitigated by his reedy, monochrome timbre and tendency to swell into sustained notes.

More consistently satisfying is the Archiv recording conducted with stylistic understanding (despite the odd, bafflingly slow tempo) by **Marc Minkowski**. As Orpheus, Richard Croft may not match Simoneau's Apollonian nobility, and his unstylistic sobs can be disconcerting, but his pleas to the Furies are movingly eloquent; and taking advantage of the authentic lower pitch, he skilfully manages the high tessitura. Unlike in the two 1950s recordings there are no cuts. Both soprano roles are vividly and idiomatically done: Marion Harousseau is knowing, impish, as Cupid (sweetness alone will no longer do in this role), while Mireille Delunsch is a fiery and sensuous Eurydice.

Paid-up fans of Juan Diego Flórez will need no encouragement to acquire the recording made at performances in Madrid conducted by **Jesús López-Cobos**. They're unlikely to be disappointed, though floating voters may feel that for all its style (including a beautifully sculpted *legato*) and fervour, Flórez's singing is too undifferentiated. In the Furies scene, the pacing and expression are too uniform, with little sense of mounting intensity. The Eurydice and Cupid are good, the chorus too unwieldy and the conducting competent but hardly revelatory.

ORFEO ON DVD

Orfeo/Orphée has had a pretty patchy history on DVD. In a German-language version conducted by **Thomas Hengelbrock** the singing becomes a sideshow to Pina Bausch's ballet, with the three principals paired with a dancer double. The concept is dramatically compelling but vocally unalluring. Bausch rejects the happy ending, returning instead to the darkness of the first scene and a reprise of the mourning chorus. David Alagna's Bologna 'adaptation' conducted by **Giampaolo Bisanti** relocates the action among the Italian mafia, butchers Gluck's 1774 Paris score and replaces Cupid with the figure of 'Le Guide' – a thuggish baritone in leather coat and shades. If you can accept the scoopy, swoopy Puccini style, Roberto Alagna provides intermittent thrills as Orpheus. But both performance and production are a grotesque travesty.

Musically, things fare better in the Munich performance of the Berlioz edition discerningly conducted by **Ivor Bolton**. Vesselina Kasarova, with her burnt umber low register, sings with sustained intensity, though she is prone to exaggeration. She does Orpheus's coloratura aria as a star turn, in front of the curtain, and goes berserk in the cadenza. But long before the end of the opera you're probably past caring, so absurd and muddled is the production with its Cupid as red-nosed clown, assorted cuddly toys and unintentionally comic Furies morphing between cooks and butchers.

With Peter Hall's sensitive 1982 Glyndebourne production for Baker conducted by **Raymond Leppard** – essentially the same performance as the Erato CD – hard (yet not impossible) to come by, the runaway winner on DVD is Robert Wilson's austere stylised,

ritualistic 1999 Paris production conducted by **John Eliot Gardiner**. As in his CD recording with von Otter, Gardiner uses the Berlioz version but with the addition of the trio 'Tendre Amour' and dances omitted in 1859. Riding the handicap of her ghostly make-up, the young Magdalena Kožená gives a performance of piercing emotional truth. No other singer traverses such a range of emotion, from numb pathos to rage, in 'J'ai perdu mon Eurydice'. Madeline Bender's catwalk-chic Eurydice and Patricia Petibon's wide-eyed, androgynous Cupid both sing with subtlety and style.

THE VERDICT

With three distinct editions – 1762, 1774 and the Berlioz (1859) – plus various mix-and-match versions, a final choice is hardly straightforward. If you want a mezzo Orpheus in the Berlioz edition, go for von Otter with Gardiner. In the 1774 *Orphée* the Rosbaud recording still stands as a classic; but Minkowski offers a more complete theatrical experience. For Gluck's 1762 original with a countertenor hero, I'd go for Gardiner with the uninhibited Ragin. But to the crucial question in this opera: which Orpheus moves you the most? I'd have to answer Fink, who, transcending questions of gender, makes a tender, infinitely touching and intensely human hero. Gluck wrote of 'Che farò' that 'nothing but a slight alteration in the manner of expression is necessary to turn my aria into a puppet dance'. He would surely have had no qualms about Fink's performance, a distillation of loneliness and grief too deep for tears. **G**



OVERALL TOP CHOICE (1762 VERSION)

Bernarda Fink, Veronica Cangemi, Maria Cristina Kiehr, RIAS Chamber Choir, Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / René Jacobs
 Harmonia Mundi (M) ② HMC90 1742/3
 Jacobs conducts with theatrical flair and a keen ear for poetic detail, while Bernarda Fink, transcending questions of gender, makes an intensely human Orpheus: poignant, tender and balancing emotional ardour with Classical restraint.



Visit the Gramophone Player at gramophone.co.uk to hear excerpts from this month's featured recordings

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

There's a feast of music-making from around the world during the month of August, live in the concert hall and opera house, on the radio and the web, on television, and in the cinema

EVENT OF THE MONTH



..... August 14-16 **São Paulo, Rádio Cultura FM and web**

The São Paulo Symphony Orchestra under Principal Conductor Marin Alsop give four performances (two on August 14) of Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No 5* and John Adams's *Saxophone Concerto* with soloist Timothy McAllister – a co-commission of the Sydney and Baltimore symphony orchestras and Northwestern University. The programme also features 'Alvorada' from Brazilian composer Carlos Gomes's *Lo schiavo*, and is broadcast nationwide by Brazil's Rádio Cultura FM. The performance is additionally available for online streaming via the station's website. osesp.art.br

..... July 19– August 16 **WFMT Radio and web**

The WFMT Radio Network continues its American Opera series with a number of productions, recorded live at Los Angeles's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion during the 2013-14 LA Opera season. The weekly broadcasts are syndicated throughout the United States and available internationally via WFMT's website. Included in the series are: Bizet's *Carmen*, starring Patricia Bardon and conducted by Plácido Domingo (July 19); Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with Janai Brugger as Pamina and Lawrence Brownlee as Tamino (July 26); Britten's *Billy Budd* featuring Liam Bonner in the title-role (August 2); Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* starring Albina Shagimuratova as Lucia (August 9); and Massenet's *Thaïs* with Nino Machaidze in the lead and Plácido Domingo as Athanaël (August 16).

wfmt.com

..... July 17 **Gstaad**

The London Symphony Orchestra returns after a year's absence to Yehudi Menuhin's Festival Gstaad, which takes place from July 17 to September 6. The 'Great Voices' programme of operatic treats features soprano Diana Damrau, tenor Joseph Calleja and baritone Thomas Hampson conducted by Sir Antonio

Pappano, and includes lyric repertoire from Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and Massenet's *Manon*. menuhinfestivalgstaad.ch

..... July 24– August 10 **London and web**

Tête à Tête, the world's largest festival of new opera, takes place in two London venues – Central Saint Martins from July 24 to August 3, and Kings Place from August 7-10. Highlights of the schedule include: *On the Axis of This World*, an exploration of the British Antarctic Expedition of 1911-1913 featuring music by Matt Rogers, performed by Cambridge City Opera (August 7-8); *Rumbled*, an interactive family-friendly production by English Touring Opera based on the story of Rumpelstiltskin with music by John Barber (August 7-8); and *The Dotty Letters of James Joyce*, based on the author's letters to his wife, performed by The Crowe Ensemble with music by Stephen Crowe (August 9-10). All productions are uploaded to the festival's website, accessible for international streaming.

tete-a-tete.org.uk

..... August 1 **WFMT Radio and web**

Running on the WFMT network from July to September, the Chicago

Symphony Orchestra's Radio Broadcast Series showcases weekly two-hour programmes featuring not only recordings of live performances from Symphony Center, but also interviews with CSO musicians, guest artists and composers. On August 1, the station broadcasts a CSO performance of Schubert's Second and Eighth Symphonies, alongside Elgar's famous Cello Concerto performed by soloist and CSO principal John Sharp. The concert, conducted by Music Director Riccardo Muti, was recorded during three live performances taking place on March 27, 28 and 29 this year. International audiences can access the broadcast via WFMT's website.

wfmt.com

..... August 7&10 **GPB Radio and web**

Georgia Public Broadcasting's twice-weekly Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concerts take place on Thursday and Sunday evenings from March to August. The broadcasts on August 7 and 10, recorded at Atlanta Symphony Hall over three nights in May this year, include the world premiere of a new work by Charles Zoll, winner of the orchestra's 2012 Rapido! Composition Competition, Hindemith's opera *Mathis der Maler*, and Brahms's Violin Concerto with soloist Joshua Bell conducted by ASO Music Director Robert Spano. The broadcasts



Screen star: Diana Damrau at a cinema near you

also feature interviews with soloists, musicians and conductors, and are available to global audiences via online streaming. gpb.org

August 8 & 10 **Tanglewood, WGBH radio and web**
Conductor Leonard Slatkin celebrates his 70th birthday with a BSO performance featuring Elgar's the *Enigma* Variations, and Barber's Violin Concerto with soloist Gil Shaham. Also on the programme, which forms part of the BSO's Tanglewood summer festival season, is the world premiere of William Bolcom's *Circus Overture* and Wayne Barlow's *The Winter's Passed* for oboe and strings. The concert is broadcast live from the Koussevitzky Music Shed by WGBH radio throughout New England, and is available online through the BSO Media Center in the week following the original performance. bso.org

August 8-13 **Palace Cinemas, Australia-wide**
Palace Cinemas present a new production of Verdi's *La traviata*, recorded live at Paris Opéra during June 2014. Conducted by Francesco Ivan Ciampa and starring Diana Damrau, the screenings take place throughout Australia over four days (August 8, 9, 10 & 13). The Benoît Jacquot production was screened live in French cinemas on June 17 and will be broadcast on French television at a later date. palacecinemas.com.au

August 10 **Glyndebourne, cinema and The Telegraph online**
Glyndebourne presents a new production of Verdi's

La traviata by director Tom Cairns from July 17 to August 23. Featuring the LPO under conductor Sir Mark Elder, the production stars Russian soprano Venera Gimadieva and American tenor Michael Fabiano, both making their Glyndebourne debuts. On August 10, the production is streamed live to cinemas around the UK, and is also available to watch online via *The Telegraph's* website at 5.30pm. glyndebourne.com

August 13 **Edinburgh and BBC Radio 3**
The Choristers of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh present Choral Evensong as part of the 2014 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, conducted by organist and Master of Music Duncan Ferguson. The service is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3, the latest in the station's long-running *Choral Evensong* programme. bbc.co.uk/radio3

August 13, 15, 16 **Sydney**
The Sydney Opera House plays host to three performances by the Sydney SO and Chief Conductor David Robertson of Brahms's Second Symphony and Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* featuring soprano Christine Brewer, who returns to perform with the orchestra following her 2012 Wagner concerts under Simone Young. Also featured on the programme is the Australian premiere of Detlev Glanert's *Frenesia*. sydneysymphony.com

August 20 **London, BBC Radio 3 and BBC Four television**
As part of their 2014 summer tour, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, conducted by Daniel Barenboim, returns to the BBC Proms following its performances of Beethoven's complete symphonies in 2012. On the programme are the UK premieres of Kareem Roustom's *Ramal* and Ayal Adler's *Resonating Sounds* — two works specially commissioned for this year's tour. Mozart's Overture to *Le nozze di Figaro* opens the concert, which also includes Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*, *Alborada del gracioso*, *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, and *Boléro*. The performance is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and on BBC Four on August 29. bbc.co.uk/proms

August 25-Sept 5 **Amsterdam, Gratz, Lucerne**
The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under Chief Conductor Mariss Jansons is joined by artist-in-residence Leonidas

Kavakos who performs Brahms's epic Violin Concerto, a work he released on Decca with the Gewandhaus Orchestra under Riccardo Chailly last year ('Alongside his customary ringing tone and clear, polished delivery, [he] gives evident care and thought to the shaping of each phrase' – Duncan Druce, 12/13). Three performances take place in three venues – the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam on August 25, the Musikverein in Graz on September 2 and the Kultur und Kongresszentrum in Lucerne as part of the Lucerne Festival on September 5 – and also feature the early Richard Strauss symphonic poems, *Tod und Verklärung* and *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*, in celebration of the composer's 150th anniversary year. concertgebouworkest.nl

August 25-Sept 5 **London, Locarno, San Sebastian, Torino, Milan and BBC Radio 3**
The Budapest Festival Orchestra, conducted by Music Director Iván Fischer, undertakes a seven-date European tour, including performances at London's BBC Proms (August 25-26), and in Locarno (August 28), San Sebastian (August 30-31), Torino (September 4) and Milan (September 5). At the heart of the programmes are Brahms's Third and Fourth Symphonies and Schubert's Symphony No 8, *Unfinished*, but the orchestra's players also let their hair down in Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* Nos 6, 7 and 14, works by Josef and Johann II Strauss, and Kodály's *Dances of Galánta*. The two Proms performances are also broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. bfz.hu

August 31-Sept 5 **Berlin and Digital Concert Hall**
Sir Simon Rattle conducts the Berlin Philharmonic's opening concert of the 2014-15 season, combining works of two great Russian composers, Sergei Rachmaninov and Igor Stravinsky, as he did with much success in November 2012. On the new programme, which can also be live streamed internationally via the Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, are Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* and Stravinsky's *The Firebird*. The programme forms part of a European festival tour, too, that's being performed at the Salzburg Festival on August 31, the Lucerne Festival on September 2 and at the BBC Proms in London on September 5 – an event which is also broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and the BBC iPlayer. berliner-philharmoniker.de

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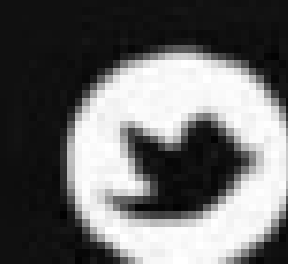
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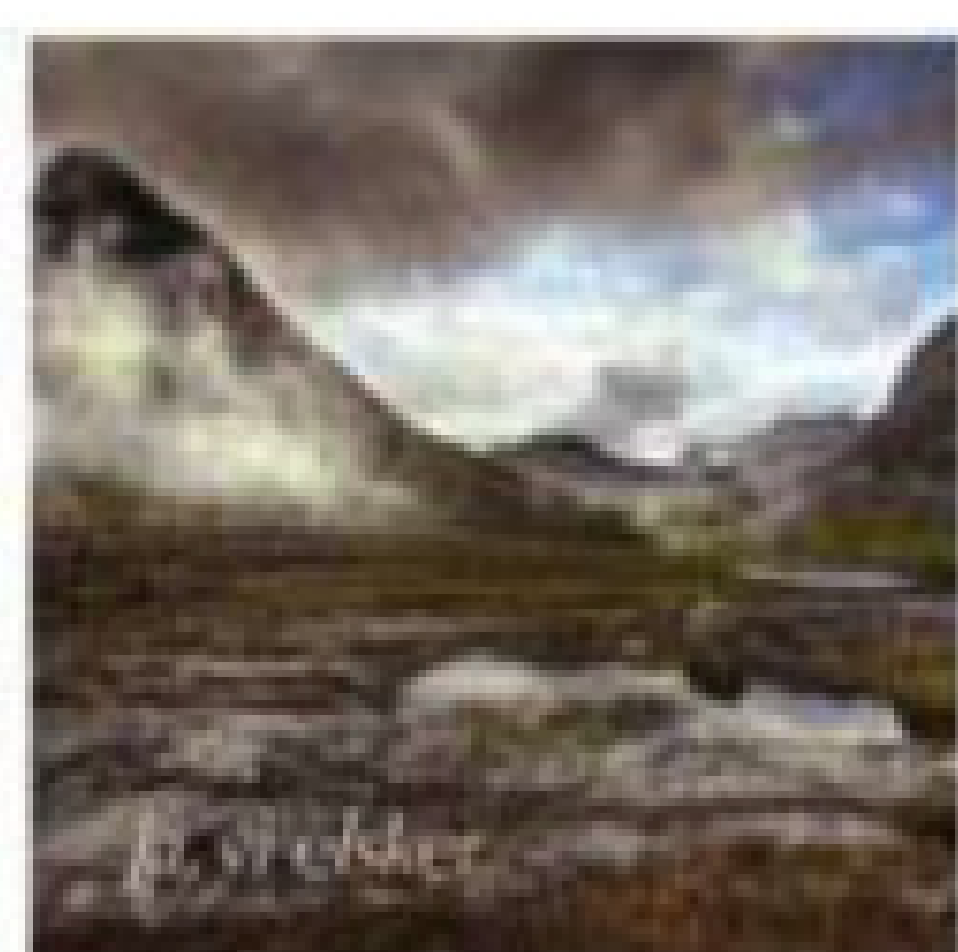
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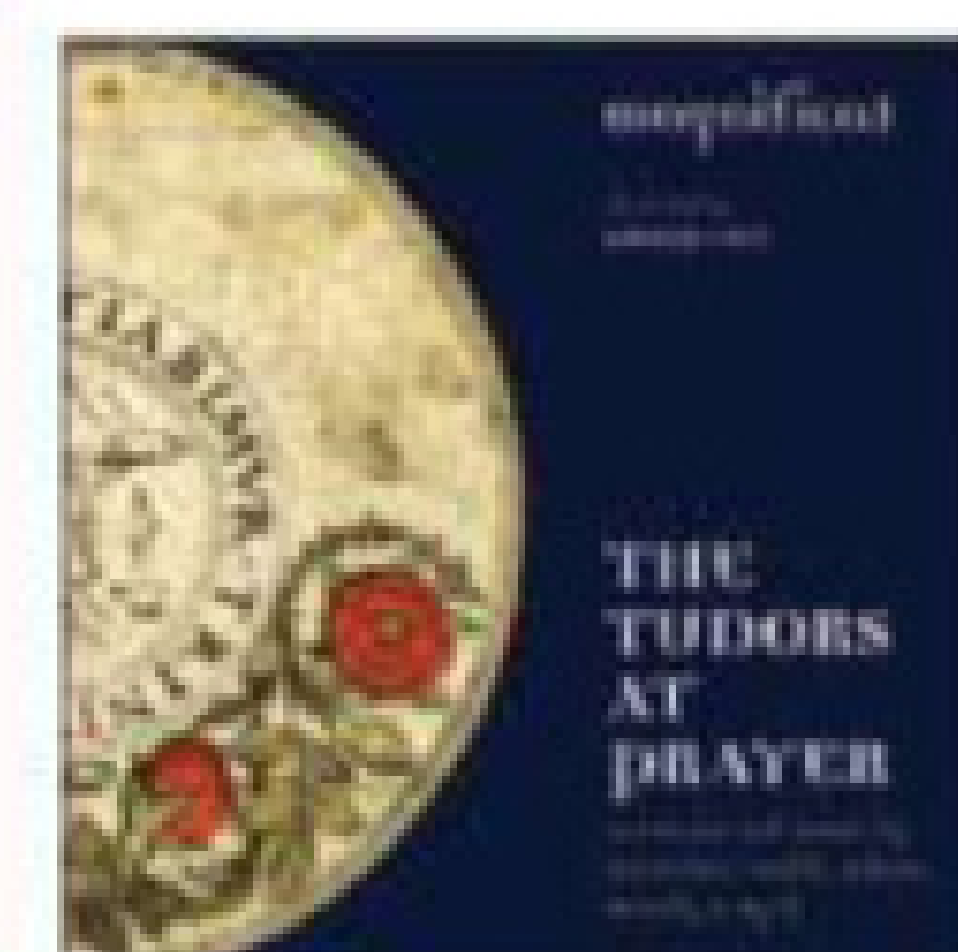


THIS MONTH a do-it-all recording/storage/player system, a highly musical surround receiver and all the goings-on at the hi-fi industry merry-go-round in Munich.
Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

AUGUST TEST DISCS



You don't have to be Norwegian to appreciate 2L's 'ja, vi elsker' set of patriotic music - superb recording and spirited performances.



'The Tudors at Prayer' on Linn Records is both rich and gloriously textured, with the 24-bit/192kHz download bringing out the full impact of the music.

Innovations aplenty from leading brands

This month sees new products at both ends of the market, and a novel concept in upgrading



KEF is pretty bullish about its new Reference speaker series, which suggests that while the R-word is overused in audio circles, the new speakers are designed as true reference designs. At the heart of the range, which starts with the standmount Reference 1 at £4500/pr and goes up to the imposing floorstanding Reference 5 at £10,500 per pair, is the latest version of KEF's Uni-Q 'point source' drive unit. This combines a 25mm tweeter with a 12.5cm midrange driver and uses the company's 'tangerine' waveguide to control the dispersion of the tweeter. The driver is partnered with a new 16.5cm aluminium-cone bass unit, and the low-frequency tuning uses flexible ports complete with a choice of tube lengths to allow some degree of user-tuning. The Reference range also includes smaller floorstanders and a centre-channel speaker, plus a 1000W subwoofer using the 'force-cancelling' driver configuration first seen in the company's Blade speakers.

Having launched its £125,000 Statement amplifier earlier in the year, **Naim** has now revealed Muso, an £895 all-in-one wireless music system. Using no fewer than six drive units powered by 450W of digital amplification controlled by Digital Signal Processing, Muso combines wireless network streaming, internet radio, Bluetooth and Apple AirPlay connectivity,

and also USB and analogue inputs. Usable as a single system with one of those sources, Muso is also likely to find favour with owners of Naim network systems looking for something for an extra 'zone': it comes with a remote handset and will also be usable with a new version of Naim's smartphone/tablet control app, to be available for both iOS and Android devices.

Also doing clever things with digital technology is French company **Devialet**. With some new firmware, the company has not only increased the power of its products but also started to introduce Speaker Active Matching, allowing the amps to be optimised for the characteristics of a range of speakers. Reflecting the new power outputs, the 100 amplifier becomes the 140, the 170 reviewed in June is now the 200, with the ability to be turned into a 400W monobloc, while the flagship amplifiers are the 400 and 800 dual-mono models. The company aims to expand its database of speakers over time and plans to have configurations for at least 200 popular models available for download by the end of the year.

New from **Cambridge Audio** is One, described by the company as 'the compact and all-inclusive music system'. Selling for under £500, it combines a CD player, 30W-per-channel amplifier and DAB/DAB+/FM tuner, and also has both analogue and digital inputs including USB,

plus Bluetooth connection for smartphones and tablets.

A new wireless speaker has joined **Bang & Olufsen's** Immaculate Wireless Sound range, enabling entire stereo or surround systems to be connected up using the WiSA standard. The BeoLab 20 is said to deliver 'breathtaking musical clarity in a cultivated demonstration of power and control', using an all-new digital processing engine to control its output. The company says it has 'done a lot of fine-tuning on our digital sound processor to eradicate resonances, measure magnet temperatures extremely precisely and tune three outstanding drivers to reproduce sound as naturally as possible'. The speakers, which sell for £7495/pr, stand 82cm tall and use a 19mm tweeter in an Acoustic Lens for wide dispersion, a 13cm midrange driver and a 25cm dual coil bass unit. Each driver is powered by a 160W amplifier, with two amps for the bass unit. **G**

- 1 KEF** Reference models range from standmount speakers up to floorstanders
- 2 Naim's** Muso combines network streaming, Bluetooth and AirPlay
- 3 Devialet** has found a way to get more power from its sleek amplifiers
- 4 Cambridge Audio's** One is 'all-inclusive': CD, radio, amplifier and Bluetooth streaming
- 5 Bang & Olufsen's** BeoLab 20 has better digital processing and WiSA wireless

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

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Analogue outputs Line on RCA phonos,

speakers, headphones

USB One front, two rear

Other connections HDMI for display output

Network connections Ethernet, Wi-Fi using optional USB adapter

Power output 50W per channel

Display TFT LCD, 800x480 pixel

Remote control Using handset supplied, web interface or third-party Android/iOS apps

Prices £879 (w/o hard drive), £969 (500GB), £989 (1TB), £1009 (2TB, as tested), £1094 (4TB), £1129 (256GB SSD), £1359 (500GB SSD). Also available with 2.5in HDD in place of 3.5in drives, at £969 (500GB) or £989 (1TB)

Optional accessories Wi-Fi dongle £34, stereo speakers £99/pr

Finishes Black, silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.5x8.8x32.5cm

cocktailaudio.co.uk

The idea of storing an entire music collection for fingertip selection is an appealing one. Rather than sorting through shelves of CDs or LPs, you can just summon up whatever you want to enjoy with a few pushes of a button or clicks of a computer mouse.

But how to do it? Storing the music on a computer and playing it out through a system using a USB DAC – or even an amplifier with built-in USB capability – is one way, while another is to store everything on a Network Attached Storage device and then access it using one of the many network music players now on the market.

However, if you want an even simpler solution, it looks like the Korean company

Novatron has all the bases covered with its Cocktail Audio X30 model. The more expensive of two Cocktail Audio models – there's also the simpler X10, starting from £379 with a 500GB hard drive –

'The X30 may look a bit plain but when it comes to quality and value for money, it's got what it takes'

the X30 starts from £969 with 500GB of storage. The company describes it as a 'hi-fi device and all-in-one smart HD music server/network streamer/CD storage (ripper)/powerful amplifier', but even that impressive list doesn't quite tell the whole

story. This device also has internet radio and an FM radio tuner built in and, along with digital audio inputs, has a single set of analogue inputs on the rear panel, allowing it to record from line sources such as external amplifiers and phono stages.

Timer recording is also possible from the internal radio tuners – both FM and internet radio – and the unit supports the Simfy streaming music service, with a promise to add other services such as Spotify in the future, though no time frame is given. The X30 can also act as a UPnP network server for music and as a client to play music stored on an external computer or server running UPnP software.

Networking, should you want to use it – for updates to the onboard FreeDB

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Cocktail Audio X30 could be used in a wide range of systems. Here's a starter set-up...

MARANTZ PM6005

If you want rather better amplification than that inside the X30, the Marantz PM6005 amplifier will be more than up to the job, with a crisp, powerful sound.



Q ACOUSTICS CONCEPT 20

Q Acoustics' Concept 20 speakers are a fine buy for very sensible money, their damped cabinets enabling the drivers to shine with a good source and amp.



database used for look-up of ripped CDs and the system's firmware, control or internet radio – is via either standard Ethernet or an optional Wi-Fi 'dongle'. There's an additional front-panel port to which USB memory devices or portable players can be connected, along with a 3.5mm stereo analogue input. Digital outputs are provided on optical, coaxial and AES/EBU sockets, and the onboard amplifier, complete with a range of equaliser and other settings accessible through the menu system, delivers 50W per channel through good-quality combination speaker terminals.

Alongside MP3 and uncompressed WAV formats, the X30 will play music in formats all the way up to 24-bit/352.8kHz DXD, including the increasingly popular 24-bit/96kHz and 24-bit/192kHz 'hi-resolution audio' formats – in fact, DSD compatibility is the only real omission here. As well as being ripped from CDs, music can be added to the hard disk using USB storage devices or from shared networked stores. An external USB drive can also be connected to provide a backup for the onboard device, with automatic backups. (As an aside, I'd firmly suggest any buyer of the X30 takes full advantage of this last facility – if you're going to put your entire music collection on a device such as this, then a backup is not just a sensible precaution but a must-have.)

Video output is provided on an HDMI socket, allowing menus, cover art and the like to be displayed on a TV screen. An external USB keyboard can be used for titling or tidying of metadata tags and – as well as Cocktail Audio supplying a (very) comprehensive handset – remote control is offered using either a web-based interface including a virtual on-screen remote handset or via third-party smartphone/tablet apps such as Eyecon for Android devices and Kinsky for iOS.

PERFORMANCE

The X30 is simple both to set up and to use, via a logical interface on its own display or a TV screen, or indeed a computer screen. Using this, you can access the most-used functions quickly and easily after only a short period of familiarisation,

or dig deeper into the menus to make fine adjustments.

Having lived with the X30 for a while now, using it both via its internal amplification and as a line-level source into my usual reference system, I can safely say this is one of the more enjoyable products I've encountered in recent times. Using the internal amplification it's more than capable of driving a wide range of speakers, from 'bookshelf' designs to the likes of the B&W 684 S2, to very good effect.

In absolute terms it's slightly light in the bass and a little soft in the treble, but this is no hardship in the context of the total package and gives the X30 an easy-going style well suited to the relatively modest speakers with which such a system is likely to be used. Certainly with the B&Ws it sounds very enjoyable indeed, whether playing the various 'world' styles of the latest Kronos Quartet album 'A Thousand Thoughts' (7/14) or one of the fine DXD FLAC recordings on the 2L label, where its delivery of the presence and sheer detail of the sound are especially thrilling.

Similarly, with the delicious Dunedin Consort recording of Mozart's Requiem in 24-bit/192kHz from Linn Records (5/14), dynamics are satisfying, and the sound has fine weight and warmth. Yes, a bit more bass extension and conviction wouldn't go amiss, along with a shade more sparkle in the treble, but the low end is always fast and tight, and there's no nasty treble shriek to upset even slightly forward speakers.

However, connect the X30's line outputs to an accomplished integrated amplifier and it will really blossom, showing exactly what it can do as a stereo component. It's clear that, while the onboard amp is good enough, the X30 has more to give when played through a better amp, gaining low-down power and with the top-end opening up a bit more and revealing better detail and presence. Meanwhile the midband also fills out appreciably, giving better character and timbre to voices and instruments alike.

Beside some of the more 'designer' offerings from the Japanese and Korean rivals, the Cocktail Audio may look a bit plain (though I'd call it 'purposeful'). But when it comes to quality and value for money, it's got what it takes – and in spades. **G**

Or you could try...

One of the problems when it comes to comparing the Cocktail Audio X30 with its immediate rivals is that there really aren't any! There's nothing quite like it for this kind of price: some products offer some of its features, but not all, and none are as flexible. And that's before you get to the X30's ease of use and performance...

Cambridge Audio Mink xi

If you want a more affordable alternative, however, you could use something like the Cambridge Audio Mink xi with an external hard drive connected, or try Sony's HAP-S1 system, which has 500GB of internal storage and can play a wide range of file formats.

However, you'll need to 'rip' your music on a computer and transfer it over to the Sony before you can play it, which some may feel is less convenient than the Cocktail Audio's onboard CD drive.

cambridgeaudio.com; sony.co.uk



Naim HDX

In the cost-no-object sector, and capable of superb performance both as a CD player and at the heart of a networked music system, Naim's HDX is available in a variety of configurations with either SSD or conventional hard drives fitted. Twin drives provide internal backup and you can connect extra network or local drives to increase the capacity – but you will have to budget for amplification and speakers worthy of this £4000+ player.

naimaudio.com



● REVIEW ANTHEM MRX 510

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It's smart and flexible but puts performance first – time to look beyond the usual suspects?

SPECIFICATION ANTHEM MRX 510

AV receiver £1699**Power** 7x75W (all channels driven), 100Wpc (two channels driven)**HDMI inputs/outputs** Eight inputs (seven rear, one front)/two outputs (with Audio Return Channel)**Video inputs** Two component, one composite**Digital audio inputs** Two coaxial/electrical, three optical**Digital audio outputs** Coaxial/optical**Analogue audio inputs** Five line**Analogue****audio outputs**

Seven speakers, 7.1-channel preouts, headphones

Other connections

Ethernet for ARC and app control over network, USB for updates, RS232, 12V trigger

Accessories supplied Remote control, ARC microphone/stand/software**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 43.9x16.4x37.2cm**anthemav.com****anthemavs.co.uk**

Separate systems, and rooms, for audio and video might be an ideal but in the real world most will want a 'do it all' solution, using amplification as good with stereo music as it is with surround sound – not always a given, due to the demands of packing multiple channels of power amps and processing into a single box. That's where the Anthem MRX 510 comes in. I first heard some of the latest equipment from this Canadian company earlier this year and was sufficiently impressed with its all-round ability that I ordered up a review sample of its midrange receiver, selling for around £1700.

Anthem designs its products to be lighter on facilities than some rivals and thus hopefully more performance-oriented, and also has its own highly advanced room-correction system, ARC, to make the most of the sound in the user's room, and with your choice of speakers. Unbox the MRX 510 and you don't just get the receiver, which is black and purposeful-looking, very much in the current trend of having minimal front-panel buttons to avoid daunting users, but also a calibration microphone complete with stand, and a software disc to carry out the set-up. You'll need a computer running Windows and connected to the same home network as the receiver; but, beyond that, it's a matter of running the ARC package, loading up a calibration file supplied for the microphone, and off you go.

Before taking measurements, you have to set speaker distances manually, as if to reinforce the fact that this isn't one of those 'plonk down the microphone

and leave to it do its stuff' systems found on rival products. There's a remarkable amount of adjustment available using the system: once measurement is done, you can see the frequency curves for each speaker and the corrections being made, and 'tweak' them to get an ideal sound.

That's just part of the customisation available here. The Anthem allows you to store settings, including the equalisation and listening mode, for more sources

The Anthem is as well suited to opera or recital Blu-rays as it is to those big blockbusters'

than you'll ever need, allowing them to be recalled as soon as an input is selected. It can all be set up on installation, meaning that using the receiver is a simple push-button affair.

Beyond that, the Anthem specification is highly competitive. The MRX 510 offers seven 100W channels of amplification, eight HDMI inputs and two outputs, five digital audio inputs and five more analogue, 4K video upscaling and pass-through for use with the latest ultra-high-definition displays, and control via apps running on iOS or Android smartphones and tablets.

PERFORMANCE

With most modern AV receivers, surround sound performance is a given, and the Anthem lives up to the standards of its class by delivering all the power and slam anyone could want but doing so without the hard-edged, fatiguing balance that's

so often encountered with products of this kind. That makes it especially suited to playing concert and opera Blu-rays, the clean, neutral sound here ensuring that orchestras have good substance and warmth, while soloists are rendered with excellent character and fine intelligibility.

But the most striking thing about this receiver is how well it presents both stereo and multichannel music without visuals. Above all it has a controlled, subtle sound, combined with the weight and dynamic ability to bring out all the light and shade in a recording. The bass is fast, tight and exciting, the treble has good bite without ever becoming over-bright or tiresome, and the smooth, clear midband ensures voices and solo instruments have excellent character and really sing out of even the densest of mixes.

All of which means that the Anthem is as well suited to opera or recital Blu-rays as it is to those big blockbusters, and also shines with audio-only music, thanks to its clarity, richness and presence. That makes it a compelling prospect for anyone likely to be playing music as much as, or more than, visual material.

True, the Anthem is rather more expensive than the AV receiver mainstream, but the extra cost is more than justified by the way it plays music – with a very visceral clout when required and all the drama you could want, but at the same time with subtlety, refinement and finesse. It may not come from one of the first names many will consider when looking at products of this kind, but if you take your music as seriously as you do your video-based entertainment, it's worth seeking out and auditioning. **G**

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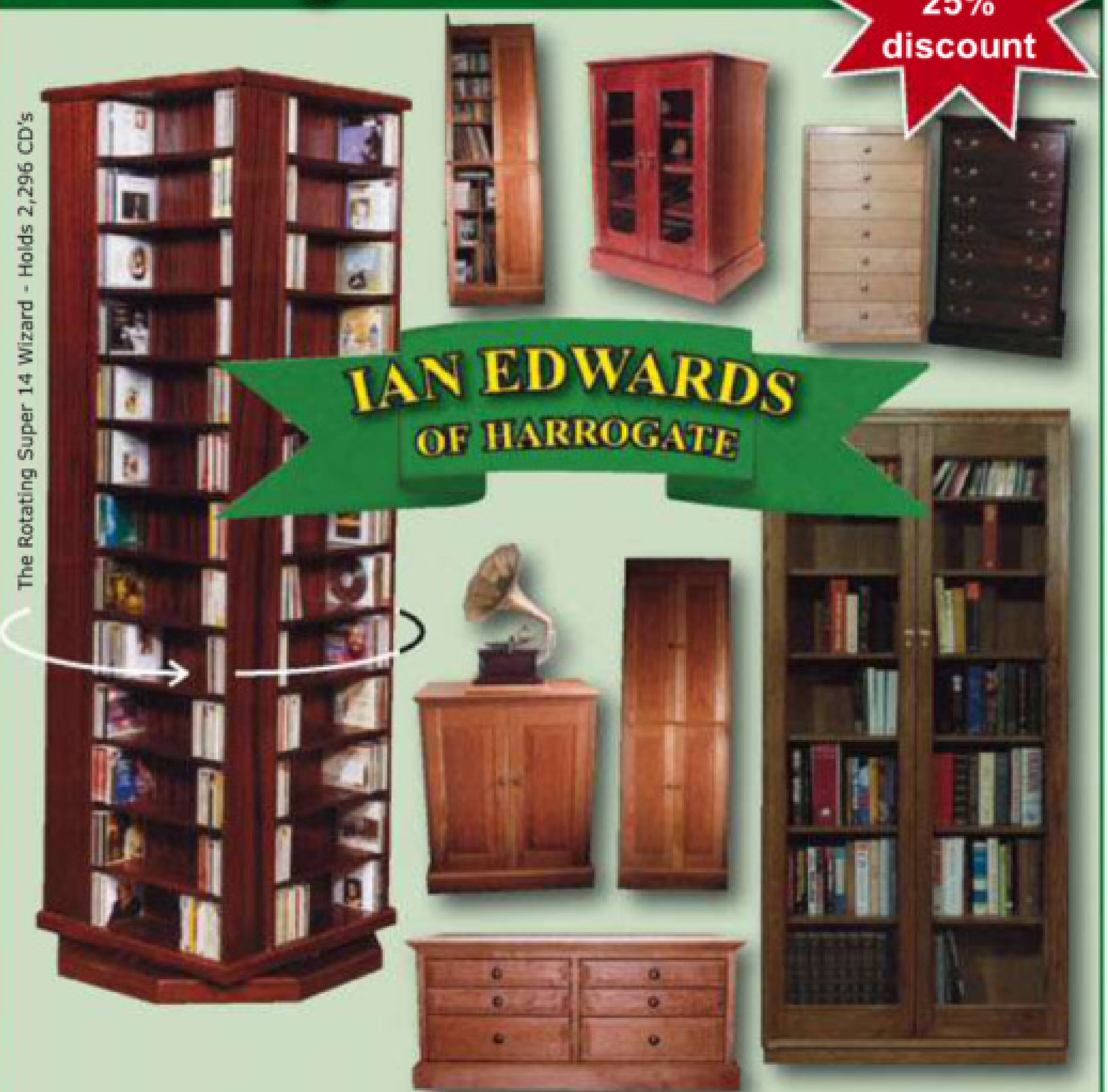
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Shakedown and some new adventures

A special report from the Munich High End Show



Fine Sounds put on a superb display using a bank of McIntosh amplifiers

The annual High End Show, held in May in Munich, is always one of the year's best forums for those in audio to gather and put the world to rights. There are new products – lots of them – to view, familiar faces in new roles to discover, and lots of opportunity for discussion, the odd argument and of course gossip.

There was no shortage of new things to see at the show this year, from the likes of KEF's latest Reference series and the reinvented Devialet amplifier range – see page 113 for more on those – to a large number of new brands, helped no end by the show organisers' initiative of providing a 'newcomers' area. And stands ranged from small booths to the rather massive – Burmester had a Mercedes and two Porsches to show how strong it is in car audio – in a space expanded to accommodate some 450 brands across five exhibition areas.

We sat in wood-lined rooms rapidly turning into saunas under hot exhibition lights, and on everything from director's chairs to little foam cubes and upholstered L-shaped wedges, and heard products ranging from the tiny to the massive: Silbatone's huge vintage theatre horns were as always a real crowd-puller, while other extravagant speakers divided opinions, and smaller ones continued to surprise.

But most of the talk in the meeting areas around the exhibition wasn't to do with what was being shown but what was going on behind the scenes. At the time there were lots of 'whys' and 'hows' about reports Apple was in talks to buy headphone company Beats: the 'why' seemed to revolve around getting its hands on Beats' streaming services or boosting

Apple's presence in 'wearable' technology or whatever; the 'how', given Apple's enormous cash reserves, was something along the lines of loose change found down the back of the sofa.

Also under discussion was the announcement that Focal & Naim, the company founded when French speakers and British electronics came together a little under three years ago, had new owners in the form of French-based investment company Naxicap Partners and private equity firm Aquasourça, and a new name – it's now Vervent Audio Group.

Since the announcement was made, reaction from enthusiasts and commentators has varied from 'this will

'We sat in wood-lined rooms rapidly turning into saunas under hot exhibition lights'

assure future investment in R&D' to 'hell in a handcart, I tell 'ee – hell in a handcart!', so it was good that the new company eschewed the usual Munich product-launch press conference to present a 'State of the Union', explaining the growth of both companies under the partnership, with Naim in particular expecting sales to rise by over 20 per cent this year, and to make clear the reasons behind this latest move.

Put simply, Focal founder Jacques Mahul has decided to retire from the business – though he'll stay as a consultant – and that meant taking his stake, and that of his financiers, with him. Hence the involvement of the new investors, whom I'm informed – by sources outside

Vervent – aren't your typical 'buy it, build it up and flog it fast' merchants but have a strong reputation for being 'in it for the long haul' and a willingness to support their investments over an extended period. In other words, nothing much has changed, although one must wonder why the change of name: logic would suggest that the removal of the two existing brands from the letterhead opens up the possibility of Vervent Audio Group adding more strings to its bow.

At the same time as these changes were being mulled over, Fine Sounds – the group grown out of Sonus Faber loudspeakers to encompass Audio Research Corporation, Wadia Digital, Sumiko and McIntosh – announced that CEO Mauro Grange and McIntosh President Charlie Randall were leading a management buyout, again backed by European private equity firms, which will see the company relocate its HQ to New York. It's all about allowing closer co-operation between the brands, making R&D, marketing and distribution simpler and more efficient, and hopefully assuring the long-term future for some famous names.

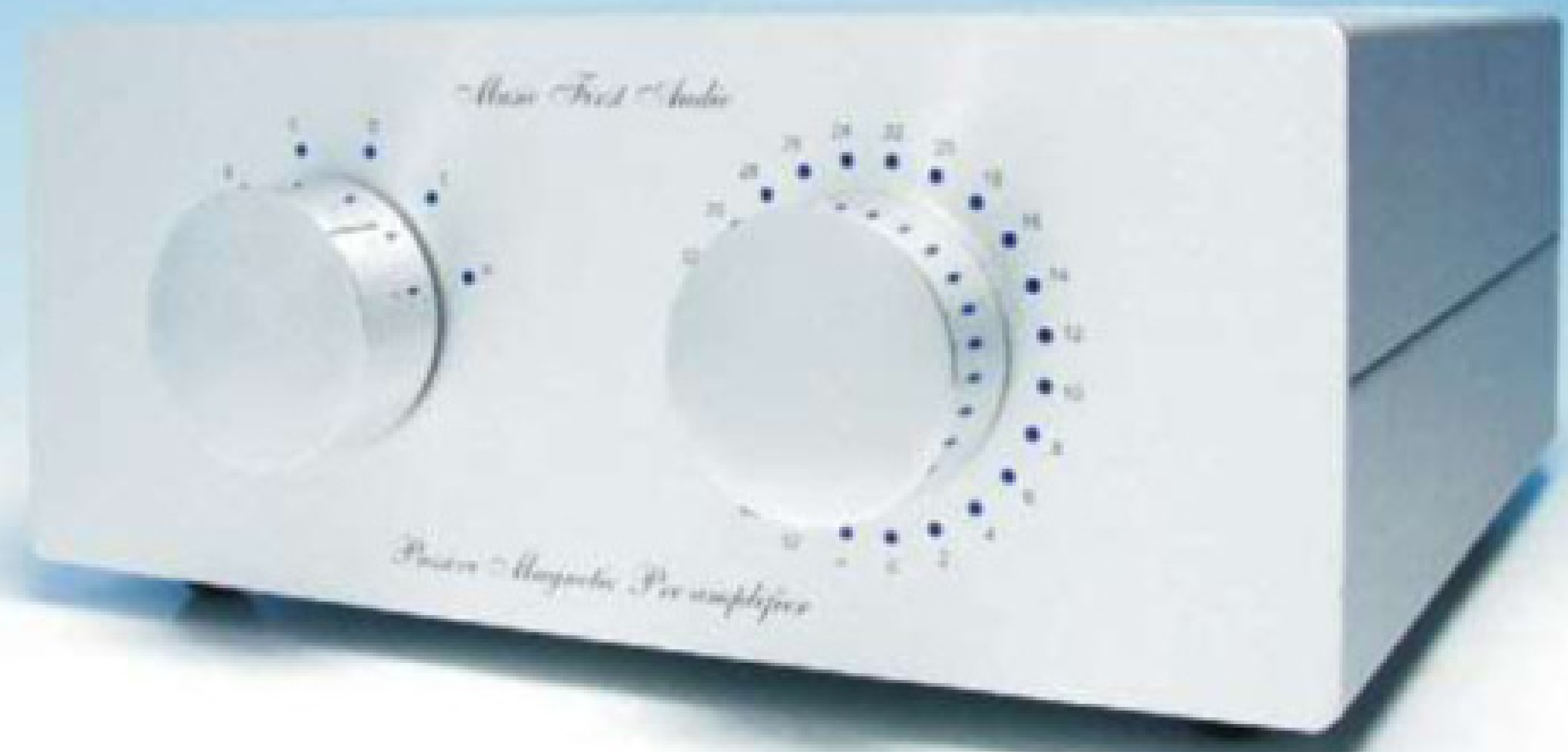
However, at least one brand with a strong presence in consumer electronics seems to be seeking a new route to survival: at the time of writing, Pioneer was seeking to sell its audiovisual business to an outside company, with Japan-based Funai seen as one of the front-runners to snap it up. Simply, Pioneer is making hardly any money from selling Blu-ray players, AV receivers and home cinema systems, and if it's to stay in business it needs to concentrate on its more profitable in-car entertainment, navigation and communications operations. **G**

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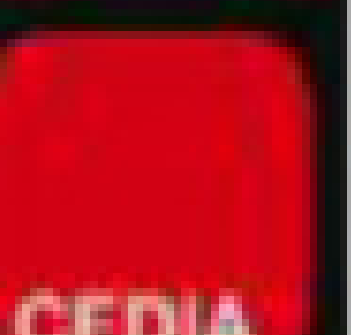
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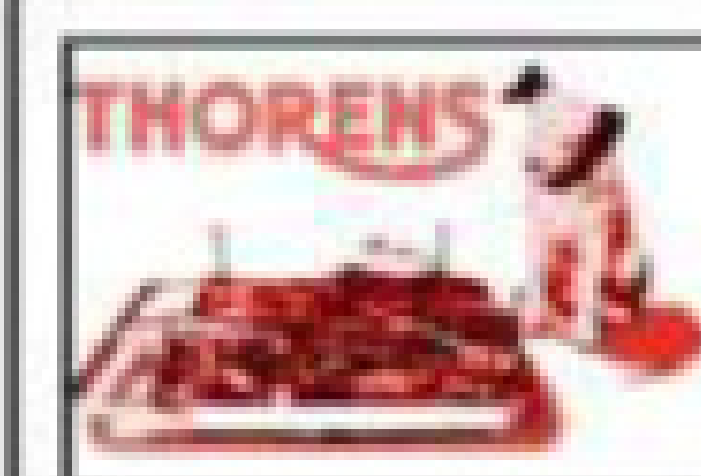
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CPE Bach: the cover star of our May issue

Championing CPE

What great joy was provided by the CPE Bach cover story in the May edition of *Gramophone*. One of the features of *Gramophone*, or do I daresay duty, is to provide even the most hardened music lover with a fresh insight into music that is either new, or new to them. *Gramophone* does this in a number of ways. The composer anniversary features have fulfilled this *Gramophone* duty in a most admirable fashion.

Like many, I suspect, I have not spent much time with the music of the Bach sons. The *Gramophone* article on CPE Bach inspired me to look into his music. The great joy was the discovery of the *Magnificat*, which is truly a masterpiece in every sense of the word. The almost raw energy contained within the polite Baroque framework provides a sensational listening experience.

May *Gramophone* continue to fulfil its duty with further composer anniversaries and *Gramophone* Collection articles, to name but two regular *Gramophone* features which drive a broadening of one's musical panorama. Thank you for an outstanding composer anniversary feature for CPE Bach.

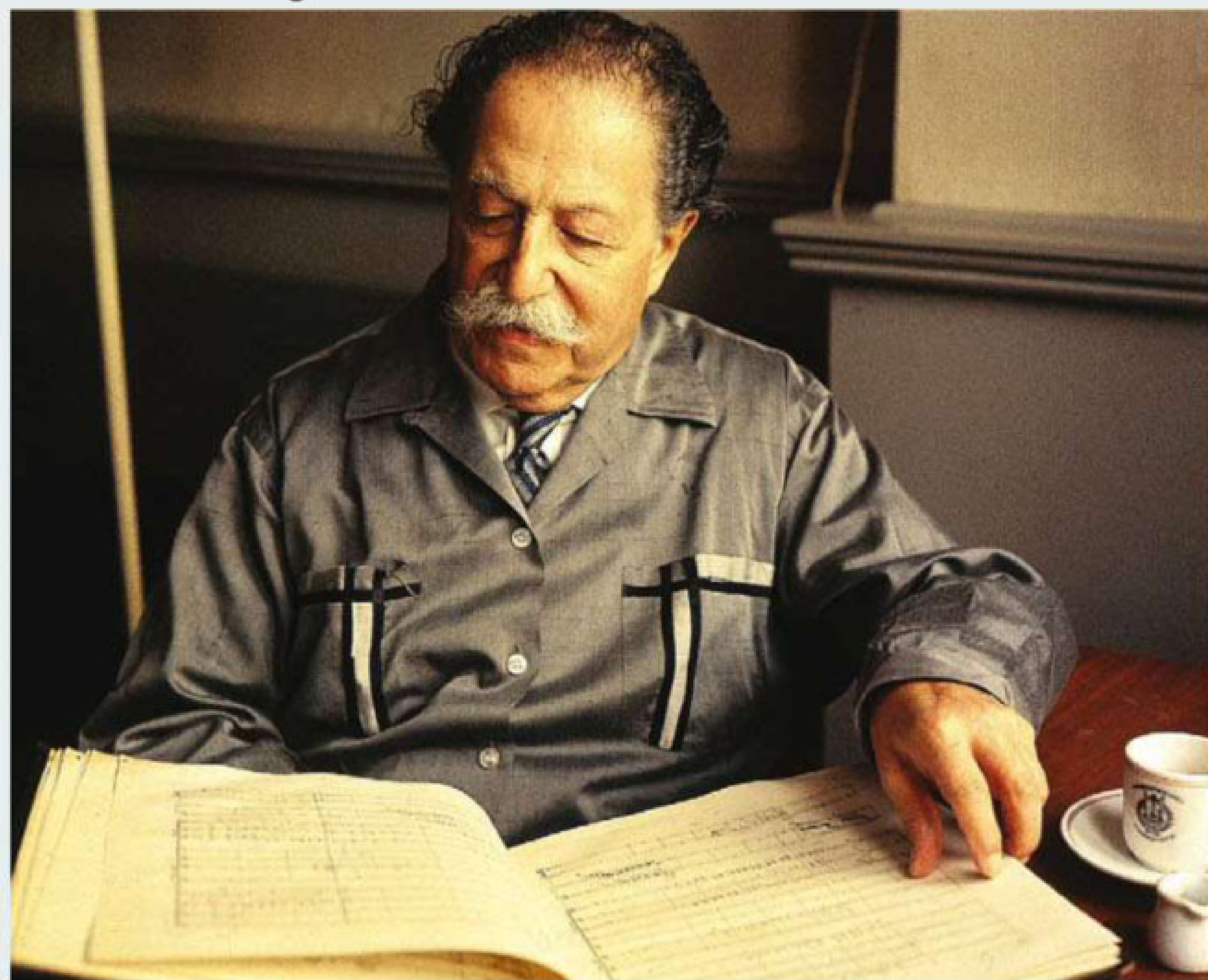
Bob MacKenzie

Oak Ridge, TN, US

Final boogie

It's my fault – it was my article about how jazz has intersected with classical music (January, page 10) that triggered the ongoing correspondence about Beethoven's 'invention' of boogie-woogie, a whole century before genuine

Letter of the Month



Pierre Monteux: played for Brahms

Monteux and Brahms

I found Nalen Anthoni's profile of Pierre Monteux fascinating. I recall that selected members of the Liverpool Philharmonic Choir used to be invited to the green room during a concert interval. On the occasion of Pierre Monteux's last visit, when Peter Mountain (amusingly an anglicised version of the conductor's name!) was leading the RLPO, Pierre Monteux was

overheard to say 'as I said to Brahms'. Remarkably, Monteux would have been 22 when Brahms died in 1897. Indeed, it is on record that Monteux had performed as a viola player in a private performance of a Brahms string quartet given before the composer in Vienna. What a link!

Dr Geoffrey Woodcock,
Aigburth, Liverpool, UK

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the September issue by July 28. *Gramophone* reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

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eight-to-the-bar pioneers like Albert Ammons, Pinetop Smith and Meade Lux Lewis. But I felt I ought to inject a note of caution. The third variation in the second movement of Beethoven's Op 111 Piano Sonata might sound like boogie-woogie, but this is no more genuine boogie-woogie than the distended skull

in Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* is knowing Daliesque surrealism, or certain sections of the *Goldberg Variations* predate ragtime.

A few years ago a British tabloid newspaper published a photograph of a woman apparently making a call on her smartphone during the 1920s.

Subsequently it was revealed that, in fact, she was holding a cigarette packet to her ear.

Philip Clark, via email

Hall of Fame absentees

Am I alone in being surprised and disappointed at the continued absence of Gundula Janowitz from the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame (June, page 11)? Janowitz was one of the truly great sopranos of the post-war era, and had a very distinguished recording career. Apart from her renowned recordings of both Mozart and Richard Strauss, placing her in the top rank of performers of these composers, Janowitz also made distinguished recordings of Baroque music, Beethoven and Wagner (her Eva must be one of the loveliest on disc), and she was DG's chosen singer for the Schubert Lieder for female voice. On a lighter note, her recording of Rosalinde in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* is also a delight.

How many other sopranos have excelled over such a wide

repertoire and featured in so many distinguished recordings?

Douglas Hamilton

Lamlash, Isle of Arran, UK

I'm writing in response to the Hall of Fame 2014 article. While I understand that not every legendary performer is yet included, I am astounded by some of the omissions. And, of course, some of the inclusions are hard to understand when weighed against those not yet included. I will focus solely on singers. How can the following be left out: Flagstad, Ponselle, Muzio, Tebaldi, Lotte Lehmann, Ludwig, Ferrier? And among the men: Martinelli, Pinza, Gigli, Hotter, Tauber, Tibbett, Alfred Deller, Melchior, Schipa. Really, no Melchior! But included are Netrebko, Gheorghiu, Fleming, Keenlyside, Carreras, Thomas Allen. These are certainly notable performers, but should they be included while Flagstad and Melchior are not?

An interesting side note: among the singers, only two had careers before the development of the LP – Caruso and

Chaliapin. Among the pianists, only one is pre-LP – Rachmaninov.

Mitch Bobkin

Natick, MA, US

Proms in HD

Now that BBC Four is available on Freeview HD in large parts of the UK, could I put in a strong plea that the concerts now also have 'high definition' audio – that is Dolby Digital 5.1 surround – as well as the high definition picture? Surely the audio quality is actually more important than the picture to music lovers. The results, judging from a few concerts broadcast in previous years, are absolutely superb.

Incidentally, Radio 3 in the high-bitrate version is now really easy to access from broadband internet, via the minuscule Apple TV box (cost about £100). An icon is dedicated to Radio 3 'High', then the optical digital output can be fed to one of many available decoders – indeed, many listeners will find they already have one fitted to any reasonably new hi-fi. Results are superb, with no computer required!

Peter McKenzie, via email

Pictures at, or Pictures from?

I must take issue with Geoffrey Norris (July, page 39) over his preference for *Pictures from* – rather than *Pictures at* – *an Exhibition*. Unlike Respighi's *Trittico Botticelliano* or Schuller's *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee*, Mussorgsky's work is not just a set of musical responses to selected artworks, but – like Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* – the diary of a personal journey. He is at the gallery, strolling around. A picture stops him in his tracks, then his mood and his gait change as another catches his eye. Perhaps Mr Norris would prefer the work minus the 'Promenades', the chosen pictures removed from their context. But Mussorgsky composed links between the pictures: he was there at the exhibition.

Philip Stuart, via email

Editorial notes

In his survey of recordings of Sir Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* (July, page 104), Geraint Lewis says that Tippett's 1991 recording was 'the last disc he was to conduct'. In 1993 Tippett recorded his Second and Fourth symphonies with the BBC SO (NMC, 2/05).

The poet whose words Ronald Corp set in 'Lullaby for a Lost Soul' was Francis Booth, not Francis Bourne (July, page 83).

John Shirley-Quirk sang the role of Mr Redburn in Britten's own recording of *Billy Budd*, not *Peter Grimes* (June, page 123).



Gundula Janowitz as Arabella in 1975: a singer notable in her absence from the Hall of Fame

OBITUARIES

A legendary American record producer; a Spanish conductor who recorded for EMI and Decca



John McClure: producer for Columbia Records

JOHN McCLURE

Producer and engineer

Born June 28, 1929

Died June 17, 2014

The producer behind some of the greatest classical recordings of the 20th century, who worked closely with Leonard Bernstein, Igor Stravinsky and Bruno Walter, has died at the age of 84.

After attending Oberlin (where he briefly studied piano before dropping out) and New York University, McClure started as an engineer at Columbia Records in 1950 and within a few years had become a record producer. His earliest successes came through a collaboration with Bruno Walter which began in 1957 and continued until Walter's death five years later. McClure wrote movingly about these recording sessions for *Gramophone* in April 1962, concluding, 'this is a proper legacy. The last will and testament of a musical giant. We are proud to have witnessed it.'

McClure also wrote a tribute to another of his close collaborators, Igor Stravinsky, to mark the composer's 80th birthday in the June 1962 issue of *Gramophone*: 'I often have the hallucinatory impression while listening with him to his music or watching him conduct, that his neat black shoes conceal two long taproots extending down to some secret subterranean power source.'

Perhaps McClure's most enduring legacy will be the 200-odd recordings he made with Leonard Bernstein, including the first complete cycle of Mahler's symphonies to be issued on disc and the legendary Carreras/Te Kanawa *West Side Story* of 1984. Bernstein called McClure 'Great White Father' and referred to him as 'my telephonic superior'.

James McCarthy



Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos: journeyman conductor

RAFAEL FRÜHBECK DE BURGOS

Conductor

Born September 15, 1933

Died June 11, 2014

Born Rafael Frühbeck Frühbeck to a Spanish mother and German father (he adopted his professional name by including his place of birth), he began playing the violin aged seven. He studied at Madrid University, leaving at 19 for military service, and once in the army found himself conducting a military band. He later entered the Hochschule für Musik in Munich, where he won the Richard Strauss Prize. He then took up a role with the Bilbao Orchestra, shortly after joining the National Symphony Orchestra in Madrid and in 1966 the Düsseldorf Symphony (until 1971).

His conducting positions include heading the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (1975-76), Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra (1980-83), Vienna Symphony Orchestra (1991-96), Rundfunkorchester Berlin (1994-2000), Deutsche Oper Berlin (1992-97), RAI National Symphony Orchestra (2002-07), Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (2004-11) and Danish National Symphony Orchestra (2012-14). He was a frequent guest in the US, and conducted the Boston SO on 133 occasions and the Philadelphia 150 times; his last conducting appearance was with Washington DC's National Symphony Orchestra in March.

He recorded extensively during the late 1960s and '70s, often for EMI, where his discography includes highly praised sets of Bizet's *Carmen* (with Grace Bumbry), Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*. For Decca he recorded Albéniz's *Suite española* in his own orchestration and a notable disc of Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* with Alicia de Larrocha. For Collins Classics he recorded the Beethoven symphonies with the LSO.

James Jolly

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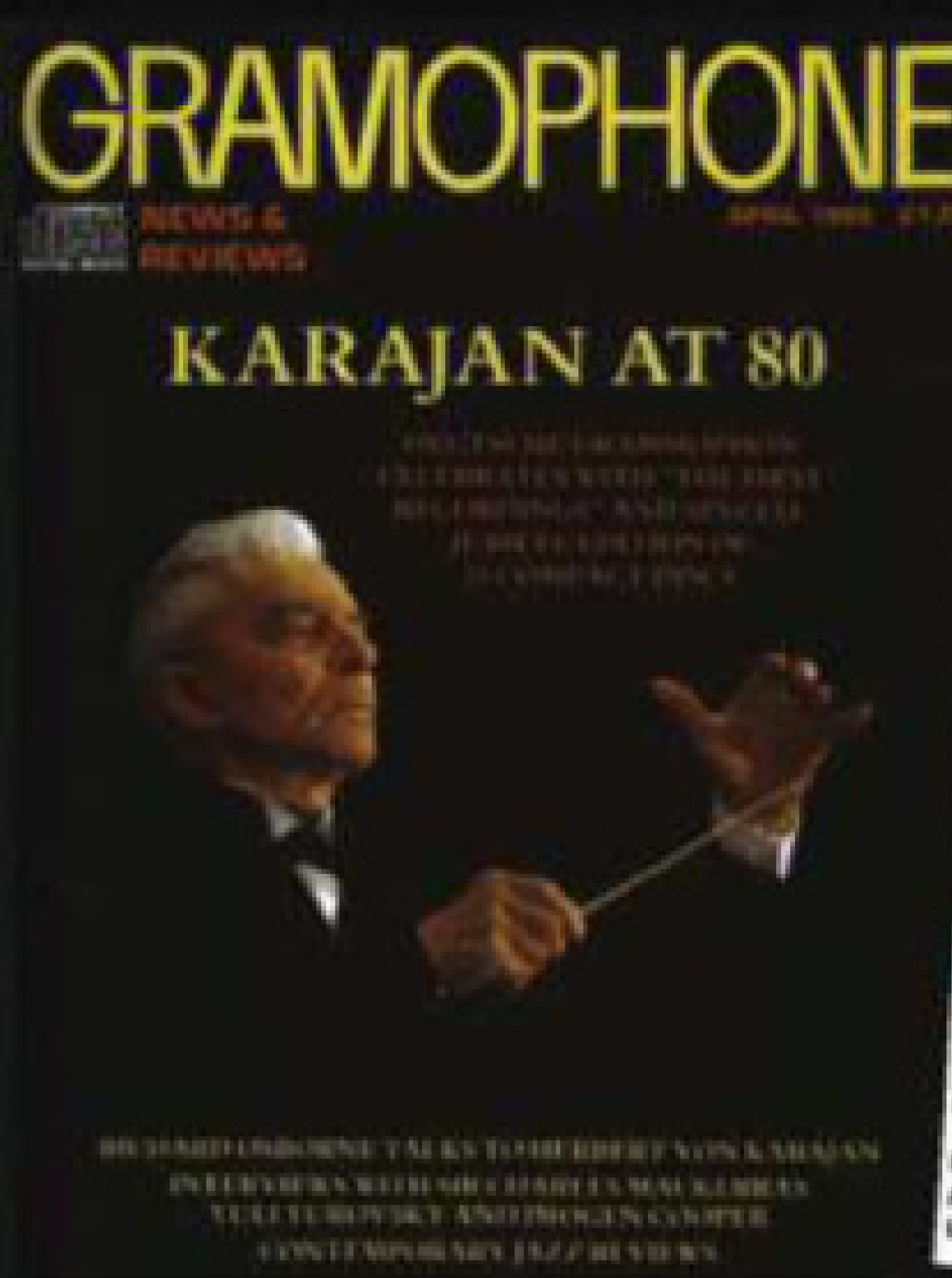
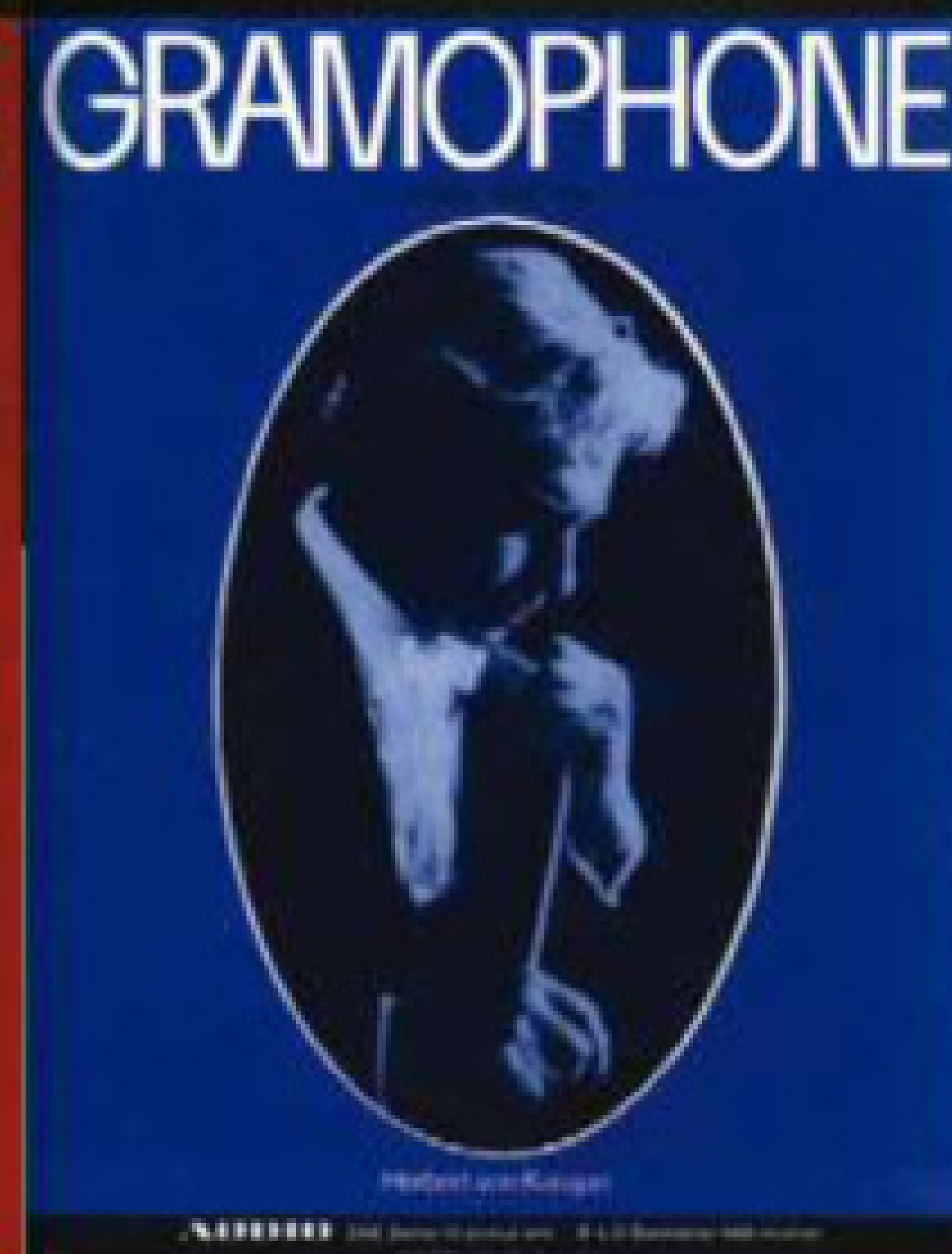
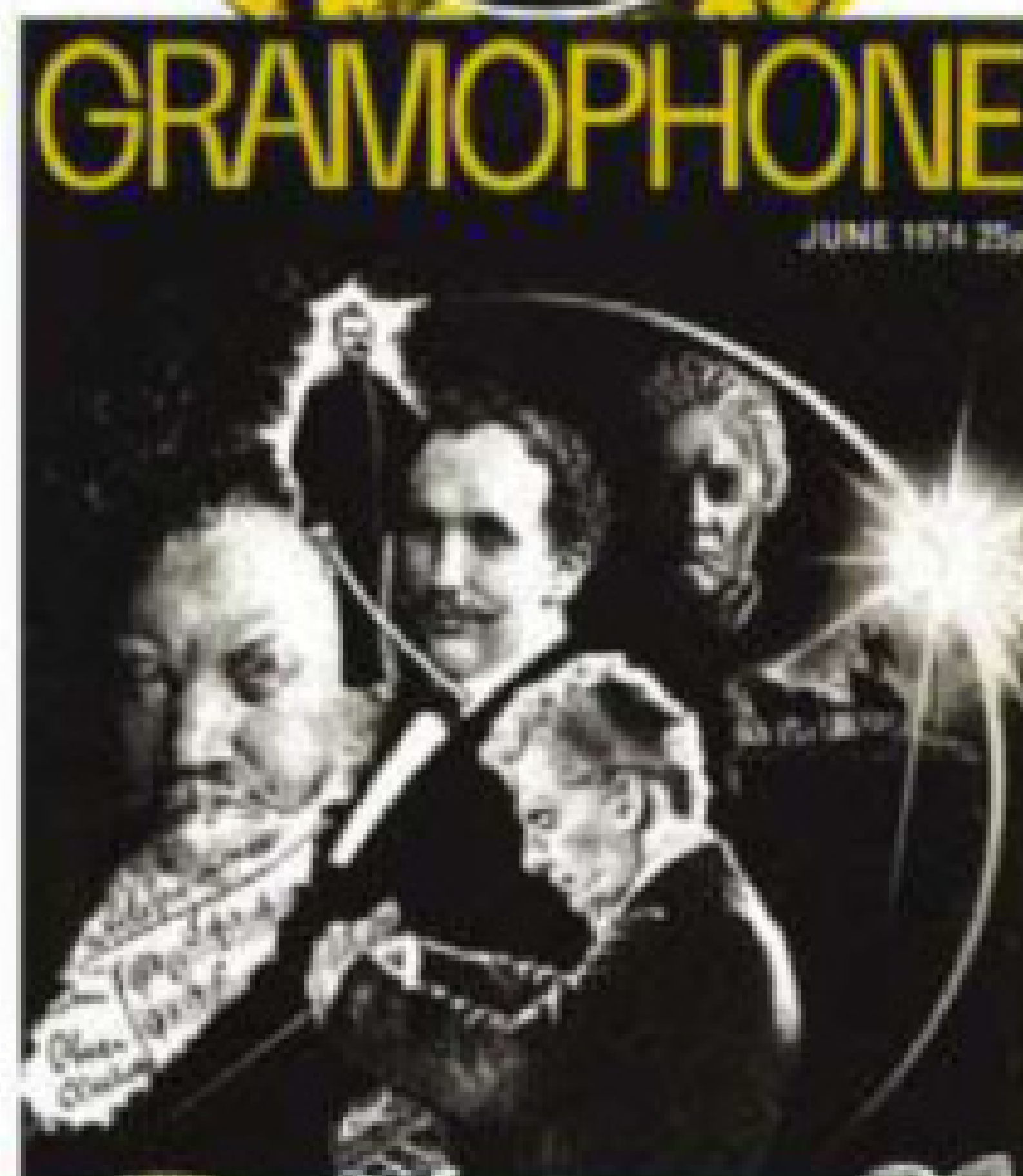
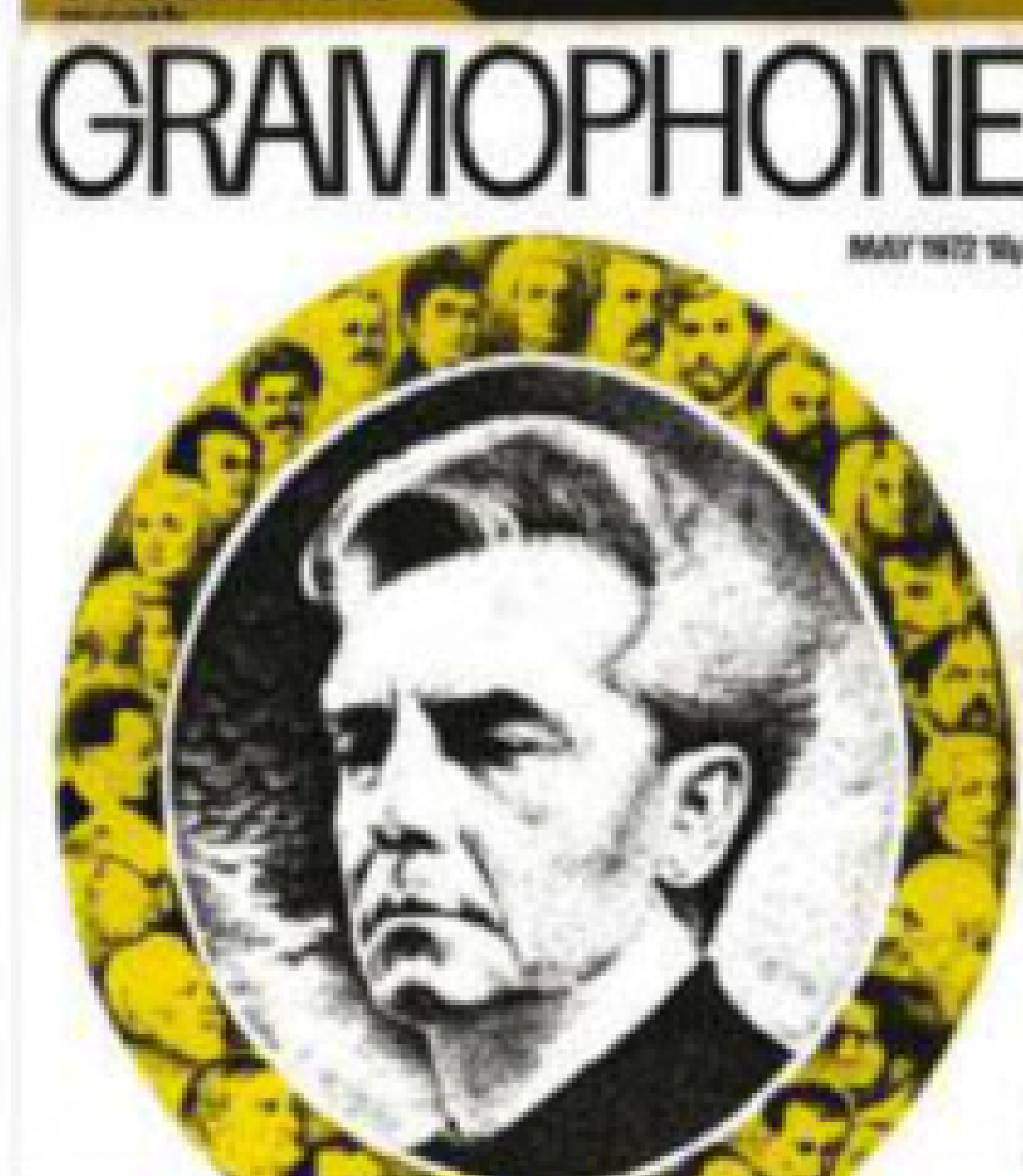
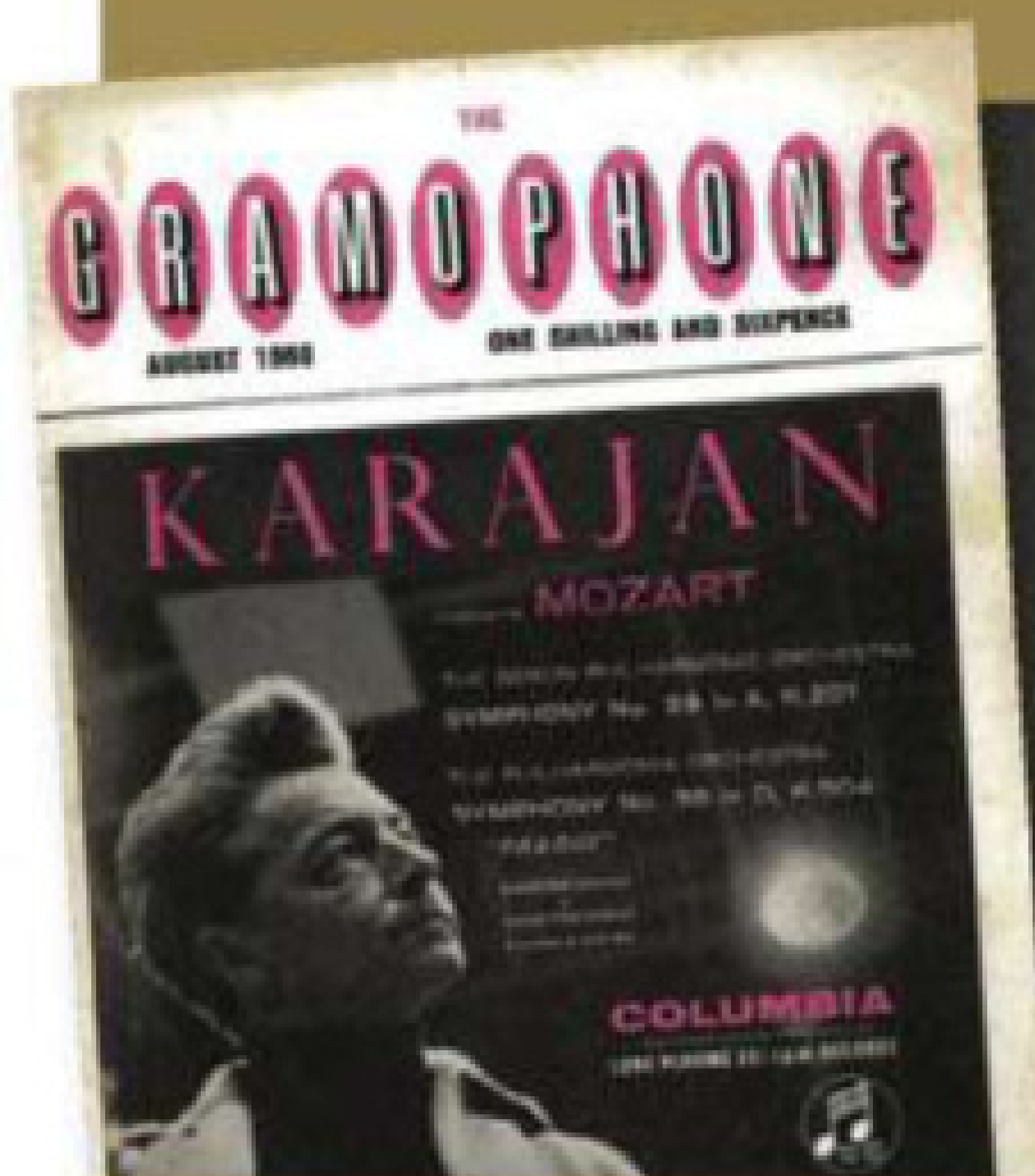
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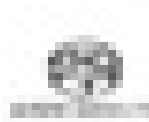
















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Howard Brenton

The English playwright and screenwriter on how music aids creativity, his ambition to write another opera – and being ‘Wagnered’

Mine wasn’t a musical family. I was quite a good singer as a boy, but when my voice broke things went wrong. And extreme left-handedness defeated me at the piano. But my father was a Methodist minister, so there would be Welsh *Messiabs* at Easter – that was something wonderful.

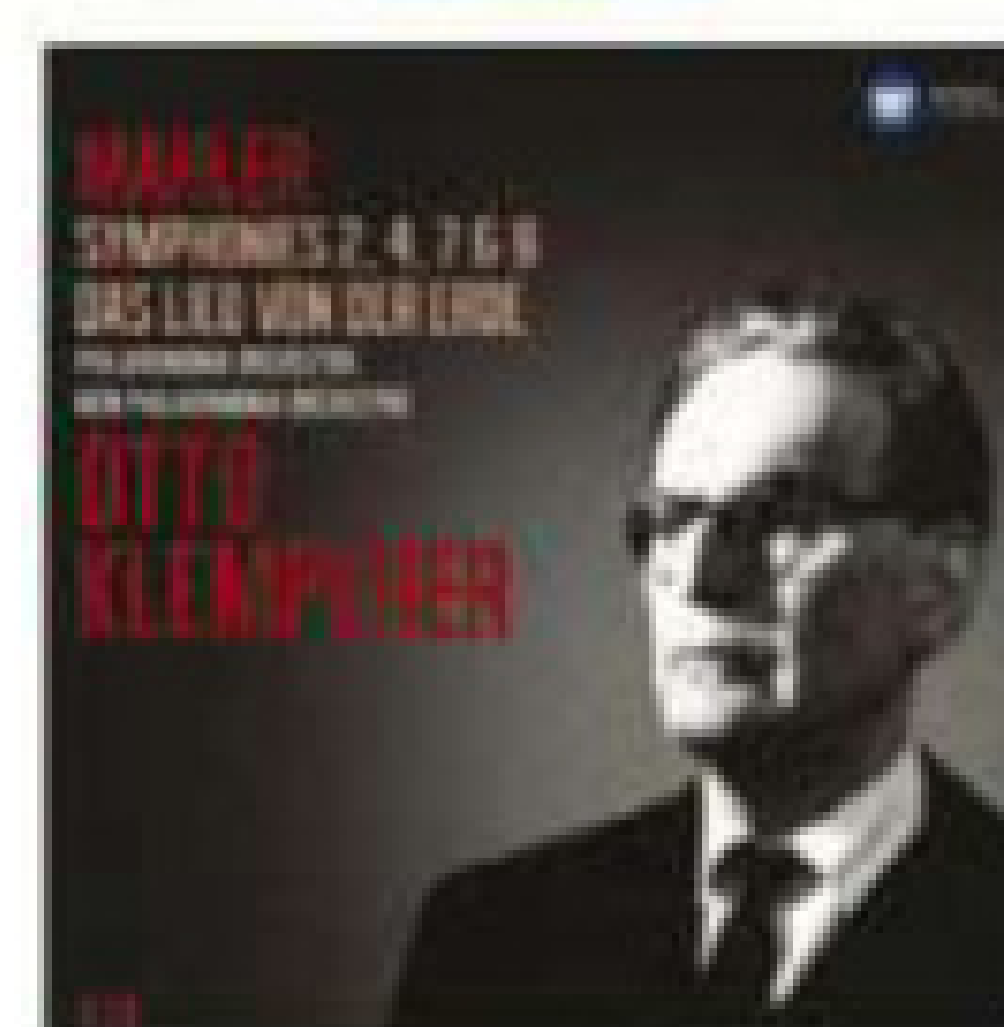
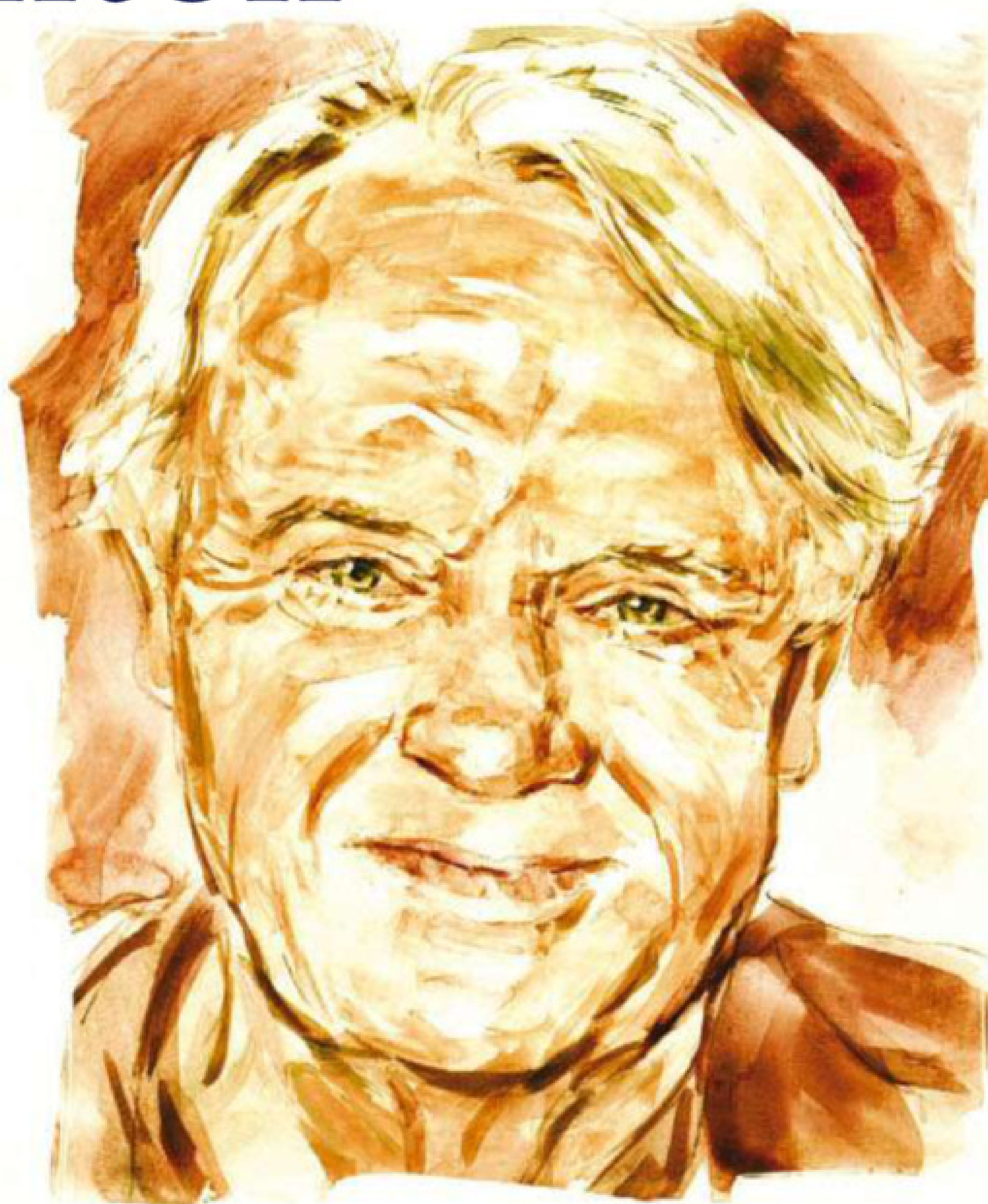
The first record I ever bought was a 10-inch LP of Charles Munch conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Bach’s Third and Fifth *Brandenburg Concertos*. There’s an insane metaphysics behind Bach’s music which I increasingly admire and respond to. I also began to listen to the Third Programme in my teens, and what really hit me was Mahler. He was just beginning to be performed in the late 1950s, and I got hooked. I clearly remember hearing the *Resurrection* Symphony for the first time – there was an old radio in the living room of our Methodist manse in Castleford, and I was sitting there thinking, ‘I’ve never heard anything like this.’

There were two major turning points in my discovery of classical music. The first was seeing Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* with my sister in Leeds when I was in my late teens. That was a stunning production, and the first opera I could stand. I got very interested in Britten after that. The second was when the writer Tariq Ali urged me to listen to Wagner. I said, ‘I can’t listen to this terrible music,’ and he said, ‘No no, you don’t understand. You have to.’ And so I got heavily Wagnered. Once you’re in Wagner’s world, you can’t leave it.

I remember a wonderful *Tristan* at ENO some years ago – it seemed like a massive midlife crisis, which I suppose it was in a way; and I’ve been through two *Ring* cycles. The realisation that Wagner is in slow motion came to me quite late – once you understand that the pace is very different to that of theatre, you’re all right. And there’s something about his orchestration – there’s this vast hinterland behind the singers. What other composer can do that?

I’d love to write the libretto for another opera. *Playing Away* was commissioned by Henze, and David Pountney directed it. It was performed at Henze’s Munich Biennale opera festival in 1994. I was introduced to Benedict Mason and then I had an idea of a Faustian plot in which a striker is offered 10 years of great play for his soul. During the final match, the 10 years are up and the Devil appears as the referee – he shows him the red card, the striker’s leg is broken and the game is over.

I wrote the libretto and Ben set it – but he chomped it up a lot and I was doing endless drafts and revisions. We’re completely amicable now, but we fought like mad, really. He was late, I was late, it was a cauldron of chaos – but somehow it worked. I learnt a lot by doing it, and I’m quietly



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talking to a director about possibly writing another one – I already have a composer in mind.

I listen to music all the time when I'm writing – it creates a bubble around me. If you play early Beethoven – say, the *Spring* Sonata – in the morning, there's that energy and you're off. And I love music by protean composers, especially when I'm writing plays about conflict and struggle. I'm very fond of Nielsen and, of course, Mahler – you can never quite trust what you're hearing, and their music contains the seeds of its own destruction. This seeps into my writing.

My new play is set in the First World War and is about the surgeon Harold Gillies and a fictional young soldier who is horribly injured and becomes his patient. It sounds grim, but Gillies was a hugely eccentric man of great wit and humanity who would give his patients oysters and champagne. I haven't really engaged in the music being used – I know there are a few popular songs, but I tend to be quite puritanical in the theatre. The loudest thing should be the human voice. **G** Howard Brenton's *Doctor Scroggy's War* is at Shakespeare's Globe from September 12 to October 10; for more information and to book tickets, visit shakespearesglobe.com

A woman with dark hair is playing a cello. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on her face and the cello, and deep shadows elsewhere. The background is dark.

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